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DEVOUT CHRISTIAN

INSTRUCTED
IN THE
LAW OF CHRIST,
FROM THE WRITTEN WORD.

BEING
A Sequel to *The Sincere Christian instructed in the
Faith of Christ.*

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

VOLUME I.



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THE
DEVOUT CHURCHMAN

BY
THE

REV. W. G. O. P. S. T.

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C O N T E N T S.

	Page
INTRODUCTION	3
Chap. I. Of the Law of God in general	21
II. Of the supreme Dominion of God	35
§ 1. Of the Almighty Power of God	36
2. Of his Dominion of Jurisdiction	52
3. Of his Dominion of Property	67
III. Of the ineffable Goodness and Love of God to Man	78
§ 1. Of the Length of the Love of God	79
2. Of the Breadth of Divine Love	80
3. Of the Height of the Love of God	90
4. Of the Depth of the Love of God	94
IV. Of our Happiness in this life by serving God	104
§ 1. True Happiness not to be found in worldly Enjoyments	107
2. We must not seek happiness in them	124
3. True happiness only to be found in God	134
4. How happy the just are even in their sufferings	141
V. Of Eternal Salvation, the last End of Man	162
§ 1. Of our Happiness in seeing God as our last End	163
2. Of the Excellency of our last End	175
3. Of the Importance of our last End	185
4. Of the Difficulty of acquiring our last End	195
5. Of the consequences which flow from the Excellency and Importance of our last End	201
VI. Of the Enemies of our Salvation	219
VII. Of the first Command	244
§ 1. Of Divine Faith	246
2. Of Worshipping God by Faith	262

	3. <i>Of the Vices opposite to Faith</i>	-	166
Chap. VIII.	<i>Of Divine Hope</i>	-	276
§ 1.	<i>Of the nature and grounds of Hope</i>	Ibid	
2.	<i>Of the Advantages we receive from Hope</i>	-	288
3.	<i>Of the Duties which divine Hope demands from us</i>	-	299
4.	<i>Of the Exercise of Hope in our temporal affairs</i>	-	303
5.	<i>Of the Sins against Hope</i>	-	317
IX.	<i>Of Charity, or the Love of God</i>		323
§ 1.	<i>Of the nature and grounds of Charity</i>	Ibid	
2.	<i>Of the Duties which the Love of God demands from us</i>	-	327
3.	<i>Of the Effects which Charity produces in the Soul</i>	-	335
X.	<i>Of Religion</i>	-	344
§ 1.	<i>Of Prayer</i>	-	345
2.	<i>Of Adoration and the Worship of God</i>		378
3.	<i>Of Sins against Religion, and first of Idolatry</i>	-	384
4.	<i>Of Superstition</i>	-	390
5.	<i>Of Sacrilege</i>	-	407

6 JU 62

	E	R	R	A	T	A
P. 4.	line	...	II.	...	read	...
15.	—	18.	—	—	—	Sincere heart
60.	—	9.	—	—	—	it was
157.	—	13.	—	—	—	V. 21.
244.	—	ult.	—	—	—	Serve God
263.	—	38.	—	—	—	in heaven
341.	—	38.	—	—	—	the better
377	—	22	—	—	—	afflictions
380	—	29	—	—	—	we are
						signs of the



THE
DEVOUT CHRISTIAN

Instructed in the Law of Christ, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

THE great commendation, given by God himself of his servant Job, was, that he "was a simple and upright man, one that feared God, and avoided evil," Job i. 8. and we find throughout the whole scripture, that nothing recommends a soul more to the favour of God, than simplicity and sincerity of heart in seeking him; as on the contrary nothing is more detestable to him than a double-minded man, that walketh not sincerely with his God. Thus we are assured by the wise man, that "a perverse heart is abominable to the Lord, and his will is in them that walk sincerely," Prov. xi. 20. that "dissemblers and crafty men provoke the wrath of God." Job xxxvi. 13. that "The simplicity of the just shall guide them, and the deceitfulness of the wicked shall destroy them," Prov. xi. 3. and that "The justice of the upright shall make his way prosperous, and the wicked man shall fall by his own wickedness," Prov. xi. 5. Hence we are commanded to "think of the Lord in goodness, and seek him in simplicity of heart," Wisd. i. 1. but "be not incredulous," says the Holy Ghost, "to the fear of the Lord, and come not to him with a double heart," Eccles. i. 36. for "wo to them that are of a double heart . . . and

to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways.' Eccles. ii. 14. Such an one needs not expect any favour from God, or that his holy spirit will enlighten and direct him. "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, and . . . the holy spirit of discipline will fly from the deceitful," Wisd. i. 4. and our blessed Saviour himself assures us, that his heavenly father hides the secrets of his divine wisdom from "the wise and prudent, and reveals them to little ones," Matt. xi: 25. that is, to those who apply to him with a simple and sincere heart, such as is found in little children.

There is no case wherein we stand in greater need of this divine wisdom to conduct us, and consequently wherein a sincere and upright heart with God is more necessary to succeed in obtaining it, than when we are in search of the true religion. When we consider the numberless jarring and contradictory sects into which christianity is divided in these parts of the world where we live; when we see the one condemning what the other approves, and approving what others condemn; some embracing certain articles as divine truths revealed by God, and others rejecting them with horror as the doctrine of devils, common sense must convince us, if we allow ourselves to think at all, that it is absolutely impossible that both parties can be right; or that both their jarring faiths can be from God; and consequently that if the faith of either side be from God, and therefore true, the faith of the opposite sect must be false, and consequently the offspring of Satan, the father of lies and of falsehood. Our heart shudders at the thought of belonging to such a sect as this, however its members may assume to themselves the specious name of Christians; but whilst we see on the one hand that the whole tenor of the scripture points out to us only *one* true faith, without which "it is impossible to please God," Heb. vi. *one* spouse of Jesus Christ, *one* house of God, *one* true church, to which "the Lord daily adds all that are to be saved," Acts ii. and on the other hand perceive such numbers of disagreeing, self-contradict-

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ing sects among those who call themselves Christians, each one pretending to be this true church of Christ, and vaunting that the doctrine it believes is the one true faith revealed by him; the mind is confounded and at a stand how to discover, among such confusion of opinions, that one true church with whom the truth is to be found.

It is in seeking to discover this, that sincerity and uprightness of heart before God is essentially necessary, the difficulties one must find in making this search are immense; the prejudices of education, the favour of friends, the fear of what the world will say, worldly interest and the like, will all be set to work by the enemy of our souls, to blind the understanding, that it may not see the truth, and to avert the will from embracing it. Nothing but a particular grace from heaven can enlighten the mind to perceive the light through such clouds of darkness, and fortify the soul with courage to embrace it, in spite of all these difficulties. It is, without doubt, the will of God that "all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. ii. 4. but it is also his holy will that in order to come to this knowledge, we must seek it with those dispositions of a sincere and upright heart, without which, as we have seen above, we need never expect to obtain it. Now this sincerity of heart must show itself, (1.) In an earnest desire to know the truth, for "the beginning of wisdom is the most true desire of discipline," Wisd. vi. 18. and "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," Matt. v. (2.) In a firm resolution to embrace this heavenly wisdom, this knowledge of the divine truth of Jesus Christ, wherever it shall be found, and whatever it may cost us; preferring it before every worldly consideration, and ready to forfeit every thing in this life, rather than deprive our souls of so great a treasure; thus the wise man, when God discovered his heavenly wisdom to him, "I preferred her," says he, "before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her; neither did I compare to her any precious stone; for

6 INTRODUCTION.

all gold, in comparison of her, is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay; I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light," Wisd. vii. 8. So also St. Paul says of himself, "What things were gain to me, those I have counted loss for Christ; furthermore, I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord," Philip. iii. 7. (3.) *In fervent and frequent prayer to God to discover his truth to us*, and lead us into the right way; "If any one of you wants wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him," James i. 5. "Wherefore I wished," says the wise man, "and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me," Wisd. vii. 7. (4.) *In labouring diligently to find out the truth*, using every means in our power for that purpose, for "If thou shalt call for wisdom, and incline thy heart to prudence, if thou shalt seek her as money, and dig for her as a treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God; because the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh prudence and knowledge; he will keep the salvation of the righteous, and protect them that walk in simplicity," Prov. ii. 3.

Faith is the gift of God, "for by grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God," Ephes. ii. 8. It is God alone, who by his holy grace can elevate the understanding to embrace his holy faith, and fortify the heart against all the difficulties we may encounter in doing so; and this gift he will never refuse to bestow on those who seek the truth with a sincere heart, and use their best endeavours to find it. It was to lend a helping hand to all such in this important search, that I published *The Sincere Christian instructed in the Faith of Christ*, in which I have endeavoured to facilitate their labour in seeking for the true faith, by pointing out to them the only sure road which can conduct them to it, and

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explaining to them, in an easy and familiar manner, all the most necessary articles of the christian faith itself, the knowledge and explicit belief of which is required to make a well instructed christian. But though any sincere christian may, by the help of these instructions, have acquired the object of his pursuit, and through the blessing of heaven, got his sincerity rewarded with the light of the true faith of Christ to his unspeakable comfort, yet he must not flatter himself that his work is now done, or that this alone is sufficient to secure his salvation: the sincerity of his heart in searching for the truth, now that he has found it, must be followed by devotion in practising it; the infinite goodness of God in crowning his endeavours with success by "calling him out of darkness into his admirable light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. demands the most cordial acknowledgments of gratitude and love, and every service in his power, in return for so much goodness; the singular grace he has received in being brought to the knowledge of the truth, as the first step in the road to salvation, whilst it is a convincing proof of the sincere desire which God has to bring him to a happy eternity, lays him under the strictest obligations to dedicate himself wholly to the service of so good a God, and to co-operate to the utmost of his power with his divine will, in order to compleat the work so happily begun. Now this can only be accomplished by a continual obedience to the commands of God, both in abstaining from every thing that is evil, and in practising all those good works of piety, justice, and charity, which the law of God requires to be done.

It is a fatal error, which some have adopted in belief, but many more in practice, that faith alone, without works, will be able to bring us to salvation. This is indeed a deplorable but convincing proof of that excess of blindness to which the heart of man is capable of running in matters of religion, when deprived of that light which the divine providence has given us to direct us in his service. One should scarce

think it possible that a reasonable creature, who had any feeling of right and wrong within his own breast, could seriously persuade himself that a God of infinite purity and holiness, could ever admit to his chaste embraces, and to the eternal enjoyment of his divine presence, a rebel to his law, a soul fullied with crimes, merely because he pretended to believe in him ; and surely, if we open the holy scripture, we find almost in every page such convincing proofs of the necessity of innocence of life, and the practice of good works, in order to be saved, that one must wilfully shut his eyes against the light, who does not perceive them.

In these holy writings we are told, that faith unaccompanied by good works is but a dead faith, which in the sight of God is the same as no faith ; or rather worse than no faith at all. Now the difference betwixt a dead faith and a living faith, is the same as betwixt a dead man and a living man ; when we see a man who has all the ordinary signs of life, whose pulse beats, and lungs breathe, and who performs all the vital actions as other men do, we pronounce him a living man ; because it is from those effects of life that we safely judge him to be so : but if none of those effects appear, if he neither shows any signs of life, nor can perform any of the actions of life, we without hesitation pronounce him to be a corpse, a dead man. We know that where life is, it must produce some or other of these effects proper to itself, and therefore we conclude, that where none of them are to be found, life is no longer there. In the same manner it is with regard to our faith, which like the life in man, is a most active principle that never fails to show itself by the most manifest signs where it is alive ; and by producing effects proper to itself in our whole conduct.

To understand what are the signs of a living faith, and what those effects are which it naturally produces in our conduct ; we must observe that there are chiefly two things which powerfully excite man to action, or restrain him from it, to wit, duty and interest: when

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INTRODUCTION.

we are convinced that it is our duty to do, or to avoid doing, any thing proposed ; that we are bound to either of these by the strong ties of justice, charity, gratitude, or honour ; this persuasion never fails, in a well-disposed mind, to push us on powerfully to do what duty thus requires to be done, and to restrain us with equal force from doing what duty forbids. I say, *in a well-disposed mind*, because it but too often happens that a mind vitiated by evil habits, violent passions, or sordid affections, acts in direct opposition even to known duty, in order to gratify its mistaken selfish views ; yet such is the influence of the sense of duty upon us, that even when we act contrary to it, we are stung with remorse, and stand self-condemned at the bar of our own conscience for doing so : and if it should happen, as it often may, that our selfish views are gratified in acting according to our duty, yet if it should be asked us, what were the motives of our conduct ? we would be ashamed to give our selfish gratifications for the reason, but would glory to have it thought by others, that nothing but a sense of duty influenced us. Instances of the force which a lively sense of duty has upon our actions, and of the desire we have to be thought to act from this motive, are to be found in every station of life, in the obedience of children and of servants to their parents and masters, and especially of soldiers to their leaders, in any act one performs of justice, humanity or charity, and in the service done to our country, or to the more limited societies of which we are members. In all which, and other such cases, the principal motive we pretend to act by, and which we always wish others should think we act by, is a sense of the duty which these different relations we stand in require from us.

The other motive which powerfully operates upon the mind of men is interest, and its mighty influence in our breasts is well known to every one from his own experience, whether it presents itself to us under the view of procuring us some kind of good, as pleasure, gain or honour, or of preserving us from the
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contrary evil. No sooner does any thing appear to us under this view, than immediately we feel ourselves strongly inclined to pursue it, or avoid it. What is it that impells us to drink bitter potions, or to undergo some painful amputation, but the persuasion that our doing so is necessary for the recovery of health, or the preservation of life? And who would be persuaded for any worldly consideration to throw himself over a rugged precipice, or drink a cup of deadly poison?

But if each of these motives be such powerful incitements to action when single, they become next to insuperable when joined together in any matter of importance; for when we are fully persuaded that it is both our strictest duty, and at the same time our greatest interest to do, or not to do any thing proposed, it is next to impossible for us to resist the influence which such combined force has upon us; and in every occurrence of life, if in any case we do resist it, we shall find upon impartial examination that our resistance is owing either to our ignorance of the presence of these motives, or our not adverting to them, or that we are not persuaded of them, or do not consider the matter itself to be a thing of such importance as to deserve our attention.

Now our Holy Faith assures us as a most sacred truth, that it is the bounden duty of man, in every sense of the word, to obey the commands of God; that God, both as our Creator and Redeemer, has the most absolute dominion over us, and the most unalienable right in justice to every service and obedience that we can yield him; that as our only true benefactor, the author and source of all the good we either enjoy or expect, he most justly deserves from us every possible return of gratitude and love. And that as christians we are still further bound to serve him by the solemn voluntary dedication of ourselves to him in baptism: and consequently that we are guilty of the highest injustice, the deepest ingratitude, and the blackest infidelity, if we offend and disobey him. The same holy faith also assures us, on the
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authority of God himself, that it is our highest and only true interest to serve and obey him to the utmost of our power ; that our supreme and only happiness, both in this life and for all eternity in the life to come, depends entirely upon our doing so ; and that on the contrary it will prove a source of misery and affliction to us in this life, and condemn us to eternal misery in the next, if we disobey him. Hence it is evident that if we really believe these great truths, if we have a lively faith and feeling sense of them, the natural consequence which this must necessarily produce in us, is to make us regulate all our actions by the light they give us, and make us live a life of piety and virtue, by loving and serving God and obeying his holy commands, and diligently avoiding every thing that can offend him ; and this is what God himself assures us of in holy writ, where he says, “ He that believeth God, taketh heed to the commands,” Eccles. xxxii. 28. in which words he joins our *believing God*, that is, having a true and lively faith in him and in the great truths he has revealed, and our steady *obedience to the commands*, as two things necessarily connected together, the latter being a natural and necessary consequence of the former : to the same purpose he also says, “ In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin,” Eccles. vii. 4. This frequent remembrance of our last end, that is, of the great truths of eternity which our holy faith teaches us, and on which our highest interest depends, is both the principal means to enliven our faith of these truths, and is at the same time the constant attendant on a lively faith of them ; and this God himself assures will be the most effectual means to preserve us from sin. Hence the scripture in different places declares, that “ the just man lives by faith,” that is, the light of faith is the principle of life in him, to wit, of that spiritual life by which he lives to God ; all his actions are the fruits of that faith, and regulated by its light, all his designs are directed by faith, all his works are guided by it ; he fears nothing but what faith teaches him

him he ought to fear ; he desires nothing but what faith tells him he ought to desire ; he loves nothing but what this divine light teaches him he ought to love ; he hopes for nothing but what it tells him he ought to hope ; and hates nothing but what it points out to him as deserving his hatred. These are the effects which a lively faith produces in the soul ; these are the natural signs of that living faith by which the just man lives to God. And indeed, if we only examine our own hearts, we shall see, from what passes there, what powerful influence the truths of faith have upon us, when we have a proper sense of them : for when we fast or pray, or chastise our body with St. Paul, or mortify our passions, or deny ourselves, or do any other such act of christian virtue ; what is it that moves us to do so ? These things are all contrary, and unpleasant to the natural inclinations of flesh and blood ; it is even painful to our corrupted nature to perform them ; why then do we perform them ? On examining ourselves with attention, we will clearly see that faith is the spring from which all such actions flow ; we are moved to do them because we firmly believe what our faith teaches us, that it is both our duty and our greatest interest to do so. If therefore, a life of piety and obedience to the commands of God be the natural effects which a lively faith produces in our conduct, where faith is alone, where it gives none of these signs of life, where it produces none of those effects which are proper to a lively faith, and much more if we live in sin, which is directly opposite to the light of faith, we must necessarily conclude, that such faith is but a dead faith, a mere carcase, or phantom of faith, and far, very far from that faith by which we live to God. And this is the very conclusion, which St. James draws from a long train of reasoning. " Even so," says he, " faith, if it has not works, is dead in itself," Jas. ii. 17. and after more reasoning upon the matter, he concludes in these words, " as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also," ver. 26. Now such a dead faith

as this is the same in the sight of God as no faith, as St James declares, when he challenges us to give proof of our having any faith at all, if we have not works along with it, as a thing impossible. "Shew me," says he, "thy faith without works, and I will shew thee my faith by works," Ja. ii. 18. nay, such a dead faith is worse than no faith at all; it is an object of abomination before God, as is attested by St Paul, who says of such people, "they profess that they know God, but in their works they deny him, being abominable and incredulous, and to every good work reprobate." Tit. i. 16.

Now can any man in his senses imagine that such a dead faith as this will be able to bring one to heaven? The whole tenor of scripture gives the lie to such a fancy. "What shall it profit," says St. James with surprize, "if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? shall faith be able to save him?" No, no, he assures us, and confirms his conclusion by a striking example, "If a brother or sister be naked and want daily bread, and one among you say to him, Go in peace, be you warmed and filled, yet give him not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?" Will your saying so be of any profit to your poor brother in distress? or will your good wishes to him be of any profit to yourself, while you refuse to supply his wants? certainly no; neither will your faith be of any use to you without good works. Nay, he says more, "you believe," says he, "there is one God; you do well; but the devils believe" this as well as you, yea they do more, *they tremble* through this their belief: but as this faith alone will never be able to deliver them from their misery, or bring them to heaven, so neither will your faith, if it goes no farther than theirs, be able to save you. Finally, the holy apostle brings the example of Abraham and others to confirm what he says, and then concludes as an evident truth, "do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only?" Ja. ii.

St. Paul is no less clear upon this head, and assures

us in exprefs terms, that nothing will avail us in Chrift, nothing gain us a faving intereft in him, but a lively faith, a faith animated by charity, and productive of good works. "In Chrift Jefus," fays he, "neither circumcifion availeth any thing, nor uncircumcifion, but faith that worketh by charity." Gal. v. 6. Charity is to faith what the foul is to the body; it animates faith. and gives it life, vigour, and action, and therefore to fhew us that a dead faith unaccompanied with good works will never bring us to heaven, the Holy Ghofl declares by thefe words of the apofle, that the only thing that will be of any avail to us at all in Chrift, is a living faith, animated by charity, and productive of good works. And what thefe good works are, our Saviour himfelf tells, when explaining the fubftance of charity or the love of God, he fays, "If you love me, keep my commandments," Jo. xiv. 15. and "he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loves me," Jo. xiv. 21. and therefore, in another place, he makes the keeping of the commandments an exprefs condition of obtaining eternal life. "If thou wilt enter into life," fays he, "keep the commandments," Matt. xix. 17. And indeed, as it is impoffible to be faved without loving God, and as the very effence of the love of God confifts in keeping his commandments, it manifeftly follows that a bare dead faith without love and obedience will never bring us to falvation, and therefore St. Paul puts this very cafe of having faith without charity, and declares its infufficiency in thefe words, "If I fhould have all faith, fo that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing," 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

Befides, does not Chrift himfelf affure us, that the fentence of eternal reprobation will be paffed upon the wicked at the laft day precisely for their want of good works? for, immediately after that dreadful fentence, he adds, as the caufe of paffing it, "for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat," &c. He does not condemn them becaufe they did not believe in him,

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or because they embraced a false faith; but because having true faith in him, and believing these very truths he had revealed, they took no care to animate and enliven their faith by charity, or to accompany it with good works. Nay, upon another occasion, speaking of the same great day of accounts, he says, "In that day many shall say to me, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many wonderful works in thy name?" Here we see not only a true faith, but a strong faith, a faith capable of working miracles, and this faith and the miracles wrought in virtue of it, made use of by those who had it, as a recommendation to mercy and favour with the great Judge; and yet, because this faith was not attended with good works, because it was not enlivened by charity, because it did not produce in them obedience to the commandments, was so far from being of service to them, that our Saviour immediately adds, "Then will I profess to them, I never knew you, depart from me, you that work iniquity," Matt. vii. 22. So true is that declaration of St. Paul, "If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." And therefore Christ declares in express terms, "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. vii. 21. And was not the unprofitable servant condemned precisely for not improving his talent? And the barren tree cut down and cast into the fire, precisely because it brought not forth good fruit? Does not St. Paul assure us, that "Jesus Christ is become the cause of eternal salvation to all that obey him?" Heb. v. 9. And do we not find throughout the whole scripture, that eternal life and happiness is every where proposed as a reward to good works? and on the contrary, that wrath and indignation will be the portion of those who obey not the commands? It were endless to cite all the different texts where

these truths are declared, as they are to be found almost in every page of the scripture. See Rom. ii. 9. Rev. ii. 26. iii. 21. xiv. 13. Gal. v. 19. Ephes. v. 5. 1 Cor. vi. 9. Rev. xxi. 8.

We must therefore conclude, that tho' the true faith of Christ, the firm belief of those sacred truths of eternity which he revealed to the world, be absolutely necessary to salvation; although this faith be the first step to our salvation, although it be the foundation upon which all christian perfection is built, and the root from which every other christian virtue springs, inasmuch that no christian virtue can exist, unless it be grounded upon the true faith of Christ, and rise from that root, any more than a house can stand in the air without a foundation, or a tree grow upon the surface of the earth without a root; although, in fine, true faith in Christ and in his divine truths be so strictly required by Almighty God, that nothing we can possibly do without faith can be acceptable to him, for he expressly declares that "without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. vi. yet this very divine faith, tho' of such absolute necessity, will never bring a soul to heaven *alone*, unless it be productive of good works in obedience to the commandments of God, unless it be a living faith, "a faith that worketh by charity."

But what do I say, that faith will not save us without good works? instead of saving us, or of being of any service to us, it will prove in the end our greatest adversary, and bring on us a more dreadful condemnation. When the soul of a bad christian is presented before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, her faith which lay dormant during her mortal life will then rise up against her, to her incredible confusion; it will then present before her eyes, in the most lively colours, how much she had it in her power to have lived a good life, and secured her eternal salvation; how well she knew what God required of her to do for that purpose, and what abundant helps she had to enable her to do it; how strong her obligation was to serve God

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from justice, gratitude, and interest, and how great her madness and folly in not complying with it. From all which it will draw this necessary conclusion, that since "she knew so well her master's will, and did it not, she has nothing to expect but to be beaten with many stripes;" since so many talents were bestowed upon her, which she did not improve, she can only look for the fate of the unprofitable servant, to "be cast into utter darkness, where there is nothing but weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth;" and since Almighty God gave her so many graces which she abused, so much time for repentance which she neglected, nothing remains for her, but "to be thrown into the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Seeing therefore that the practice of good works, the works of virtue and piety, by a continual obedience to the commands of God, is so essentially necessary for securing the great work of our salvation; the sincere christian, who has acquired the object of his wishes, and is come to the knowledge of the true faith of Christ, must not flatter himself that all is done, or that his cheerfully embracing that holy faith, and becoming a member of the church of Christ, will alone be sufficient to bring him to the enjoyment of Christ; one half of the work is only done, and the less half too; and therefore from a sincere christian enquiring after the truth, now that he has found it, he must become a devout christian in practising it; otherwise he will never obtain the wished-for crown of immortality. The infinite goodness of Almighty God in bringing him out of darkness to his admirable light, in preference to so many others to whom this grace is refused, strictly demands on his side a correspondence with so much goodness, by gratitude and love, of which the great proof, which God requires, is obedience to his holy commandments. Wherefore the sincere christian, now brought to the truth, and become a member of the church of Christ, must consider as

addressed to himself in particular, those serious advices which St. Peter and St Paul gave to their late converted disciples, and in them to all others who are called to the christian faith; "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for what things a man shall sow, these also shall he reap; for he that soweth in the flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption, but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting. And in doing good let us not fail, for in due time we shall reap, not failing. Therefore, whilst we have time, let us do good to all men," Gal. vi. 7. "You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk ye as the children of light, for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth, proving what is well pleasing to God, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Ephes. v. 8. "By Christ God hath given us most great and precious promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature, flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world. And you, giving all diligence, join with your faith, virtue; and with virtue, knowledge; and with knowledge, abstinence; and with abstinence, patience; and with patience, godliness; and with godliness, brotherly love; and with brotherly love, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they will make you to be neither empty nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that hath not these things with him, is *blind and groping*, forgetting his being purged from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, *labour the more, that by good works* you may make your calling and election sure; for doing these things you shall not sin at any time, and so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. i. 10.

As therefore in the former part of this work, I endeavoured to conduct the *sincere Christian* who seeks the truth, from the first principles of christianity to the full knowledge of the true church of Christ, in
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which alone his holy faith is to be found, and explained to him all those truths of that divine faith which it is necessary for every one to know, in order to be a well instructed christian; so the design of this present work is to instruct the *Devout Christian*, who having found and embraced the truth which he sincerely sought for, is now firmly resolved to practise it, in all the different branches of his duty which the law of God demands from him. In doing this, I have made it my particular care to be plain and clear, that what I advance may be understood by the meanest capacity: I have purposely avoided all particular opinions about any moral duty, and endeavoured to stick close to the plain simple decisions of God's holy word. With this view, I have even avoided many human reasons, which might laudably have been brought to confirm and enforce any duty, and as much as possible have given the answers to the questions proposed, in the very words of the scripture, or in equivalent terms, evidently contained in the texts adduced to prove them. Indeed, my principal intention was, that these instructions on the law of Christ, should be, as the title bears, *from the written word*; because proofs of such authority admit of no evasion. *God has said it!* and who will dare to deny it? Proofs of this kind, are of all others the most persuasive to a sincere christian; and I have found by experience, that instructions to the christian people, built upon, and illustrated from a proper choice of such proofs, are of all others the most penetrating to their hearts, and the most fruitful in their effects. Perhaps those who have such instructions to give, may find some help from this work; at least, if they choose to follow this method, it will save them a great deal of labour in collecting such scripture testimonies themselves, as they will here find them collected to their hand, on all the chief duties of christian morality. I only beg the devout reader not to pass slightly over what is here contained. The subject is important; it deserves the most serious application; let him therefore,

ponder well and meditate on the great truths here laid down; let him remember, as he peruses the sacred testimonies here collected, that it is God who speaks in them; that they are therefore eternal truths; that no human reason can invalidate them; that heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall never pass away; and that therefore, all the suggestions of flesh and blood, all the evasions of self-love, are to be rejected and contemned, as lying monitors, when they dare to oppose themselves to this heavenly light. But above all, let him make it his constant endeavours to regulate his life and conduct by these divine laws, which alone will bring him to eternal happiness, "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified," Rom. i. 13.

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Of the Law of God in general.

Q. 1. **W**HAT is the law of God?

A. It is the manifestation of his will to man, declaring what he requires of man to do and to avoid, in order to please God and save his own soul.

Q. 2. Where is this manifestation of the will of God to be found?

A. In the ten commandments; which are an abridgement of all that we have to do, as the creed is an abridgement of all we have to believe, and the Lord's prayer is an abridgement of all we have to ask of God, in order to be saved.

Q. 3. When did God manifest his will to man in the ten commandments?

A. After he had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and carried them through the Red Sea, into the wilderness, he there appeared to the whole people in a most awful manner, and with his own mouth promulgated, in the hearing of the whole multitude, the ten commandments; and he afterwards wrote them with his own finger on two tables of stone, and gave them to Moses, to be preserved in the ark, as the continual rule of our actions.

Q. 4. What account does the scripture give of this awful scene?

A. It is thus described in the book of Exodus, chap. xix. "And God said to Moses, Go to the people and sanctify them to-day and to morrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready against the third-day; for on the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people, upon mount

Mount Sinai ; and thou shalt appoint certain limits to the people round about, and thou shalt say to them, **Take heed ye go not up into the mount, and that ye touch not the borders thereof ; every one that toucheth the mount, dying he shall die ; no hands shall touch him, but he shall be stoned to death, nor shall he be shot through with arrows ; whether it be beast or man, he shall not live.** And Moses came down from the mount to the people, and sanctified them, and when they had washed their garments, he said to them, Be ready against the third day, and come not near your wives. And now the third day was come, and the morning appeared ; and behold thunders began to be heard, and lightning to flash, and a very thick cloud to cover the mount, and the noise of the trumpet sounded exceeding loud, and the people that was in the camp feared . . . And all mount Sinai was on a smoke, because the Lord was come down upon it in fire, and the smoke rose from it as out of a furnace : and all the mount was terrible. And the sound of the trumpet grew by degrees louder and louder, and was drawn out to a greater length." Now from the midst of all this dreadful apparatus, the voice of God was heard by the whole people, when he pronounced to them his law, saying,

" I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no strange Gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth ; thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them : I am the Lord thy God, mighty, and jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy to thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

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"Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day ; six days shalt thou labour and shalt do all thy work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God : on it thou shalt do no manner of work ; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gate. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day, therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it."

"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land, which the Lord thy God will give thee."

"Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house. Neither shalt thou covet his wife, nor his servant, nor his hand maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his."

Q. 5. Why did God proclaim his law in so tremendous a manner?

A. For several reasons. (1.) To give credit and authority to Moses, and to persuade the world that he was sent by God ; thus God says to Moses, "Lo now I will come to thee in the darkness of a cloud, that the people may hear me speaking to thee, and may believe thee for ever." Exod. xix. 9. (2.) To teach us with what profound reverence and respect we ought always to receive instructions on the law of God, and hear his word : which appears from the great preparation he required of his people, to fit them for receiving his law, and the distance he obliged them to keep at from the mountain, while it was given to them. (3.) To fill our minds with the wholesome fear of God, considering how tremendous and awful a Being he is ; and (4.) To make us exceeding careful in keeping and obeying his commands ; for, when

when "all the people saw the voices and the flames, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mount smoaking, being terrified and struck with fear, they stood afar off, saying to Moses, Speak thou unto us and we will hear; let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die. And Moses said to the people, Fear not, for God is come to prove you, and that the *dread of him* might be in you, and *you should not sin*." Exod. xx. 18.

Q. 6. Why did God begin the declaration of his law, by these words, "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage?"

A. To imprint in our hearts a just sense of the infinite power, dominion, authority and majesty of our divine Lawgiver, who is the "Lord our God," a being of infinite perfections, who has an unlimited power, and the most absolute dominion over us and over all creatures; who can do with us whatever he pleases, and who alone can defend us from all dangers, deliver us from all evils, and bestow upon us all good, both for time and eternity; and from this consideration to make us receive his law with greater respect, and observe it with the utmost fidelity.

Q. 7. Why does God add to the first command these words, "for I am the Lord thy God, strong and jealous, visiting, &c.?"

A. To imprint in our mind a just sense of the infinite power and severity of God as our judge, and of his ardent zeal for the faithful observance of his law, assuring us that he will most undoubtedly punish all those who transgress it, and amply reward those who are careful to obey it?

Q. 8. Was this law of God, as contained in the ten commands, a new law?

A. No: it is the same law that God, in creating man, had imprinted in his mind at the beginning by the light of reason; for except the single article of determining the seventh day of the week to be set apart for the service of God, the ten commands contain nothing but the natural duties of man to God, and to

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his neighbour, the knowledge of which God has engraved in the bottom of our heart by the light of nature, and by the sense which every one has of right and wrong; which, had man continued in the state of innocency, would have been in all cases a full and sufficient rule to guide and direct him in all his conduct. But the heart of man having been corrupted by sin, he gave not the proper attention to this light, which in process of time, by the repetition of sin, became so dark and obscure, that it seemed almost quite extinguished; for this reason, God of his infinite mercy, was pleased to give his chosen people, in order to preserve them from the general corruption of the rest of mankind, an external renovation of this divine law contained in the ten commandments: and in so doing he manifested his special love and predilection for that people, the posterity of his servant Abraham, for which the royal prophet warmly exhorts them to be grateful to God, and to thank and praise him for such a distinguished mercy. "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion . . . who hath declared his word to Jacob, his justices and his judgments to Israel: he hath not done in like manner to every nation, and his judgments he hath not made manifest to them." Psal. cxlvii. 1. 19.

Q. 9. Are we christians obliged to obey the ten commands given to the Jews?

A. Most undoubtedly; because though the ceremonial law given to the Jews, and what regarded their policy and forms of judgment, as being intended only for their nation, and a figure of the good things then to come, be noways binding upon christians, but was wholly abrogated when the gospel appeared, and the Jews ceased to be a nation, yet the ten commands, excepting only the determination of the seventh day, as they are only an external declaration of the eternal law of God, imprinted in our heart by the light of nature, can never be abrogated, nor cease to be binding upon every human creature. Hence our blessed Saviour makes the observance of them an absolute condition

condition of salvation. "If thou wilt enter into life," says he, "keep the commandments." Matt. xix. 17. Luke xviii. 20. and this he declared in answer to the question, expressly put to him by the young man, "What must I do to possess eternal life?" And whereas the Jews, blinded by their passions and carnal views, had put false glosses and explications on several of the commands, he was pleased in his divine sermon on the mount, to correct these false interpretations, and explain the true sense and meaning of these commands, declaring at the same time the absolute obligation that his followers have of observing them, and assuring us that he was "come not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," Matt. v. 17. and to show us the permanency and indefectibility of this divine law, he immediately adds, with his usual asseveration, "Amen, I say unto you, till heaven, and earth pass away, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." ver. 18.

Q. 10. How great is our obligation to obey the law of God?

A. Besides what we have seen at large in the introduction, we must further observe, that obedience to the law of God is the very end of our being, the very end which God had in creating us: "Let us all hear together," says Solomon, "the conclusion of the discourse; fear God and keep his commandments, for this is all man." Eccl. xii. 13. that is, this is all and all to man; this is the whole business and duty of man; this is all he has to do in this world; in a word, this is his perfection, his happiness, his all: for as the sun was created to give light, and the fire to heat, the water to refresh, and the air to breathe, the earth to produce its fruits, and these fruits to nourish man; so man himself was created to fear God, and keep his commandments; and as these creatures would become monsters and useless, if they ceased to perform the end for which God created them, so man is no less so, if he disobeys the commands of God; whatever he does without this, is all
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nothing, for "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." 1 Cor. vii. 19. and after all, what are the commands of God, but the manifestation of his will to man? Now as every man, with reason, expects and requires that his will should be obeyed by those under his authority, and considers them as obliged to do so, how much more must we be obliged to obey the will of God, who has the most absolute and unalienable authority over us, as his creatures, and can do with us whatever he pleases?

Q. 11. In what manner ought we to obey the commandments?

A. We must obey them in the manner, in which Jesus Christ requires us; not according to the false explications of the Jews, nor after the example of the Pharisees, but according to the true interpretation which Jesus Christ has given us of them, and with that perfection which he points out to us in the gospel.

Q. 12. In what does this perfection of our obedience to the law consist?

A. Our Saviour has a very remarkable saying in the gospel, which will explain this to us. "I tell you, *says he*, except your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 20. The Scribes were the doctors of the law; and the Pharisees were a precise set of men, making profession of a more than ordinary exact observance of the law; and upon that account, were greatly esteemed among the people; and it must be owned there were many things in their conduct exceedingly laudable, and which may even be a reproach to us christians; for they abhorred all manner of blasphemy and profanation of the name of God; they had a horror at all sorts of uncleanness; they observed the sabbath day with a scrupulous exactness; they made open profession of piety; they fasted frequently; and were very charitable to the poor; yet notwithstanding all this, our Saviour expressly declares,

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that except we keep the law in a more perfect manner than they did, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven ; because their exactness in these duties was accompanied with several essential failings, for which Christ pronounced woes against them, and in the careful avoiding of these defects, our obedience to the law must exceed theirs, if we want to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now their defects in keeping the law, were chiefly these following, (1.) They carefully avoided smaller sins, and made a great noise about outward observances, but neglected the more essential duties which the law prescribed ; on this account, our Saviour says to them, “ Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have let alone the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith ; these things you ought to have done, and not to leave those others undone. Blind guides, who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.” Matt. xxiii. 23. Thus they thought it a crime, to pull ears of corn when hungry on the sabbath, but they made no scruple to “ devour the houses of widows.” Matt. xxiii. 14. They thought it a crime to eat with unwashen hands, but they thought it no sin to “ shut the kingdom of heaven against men, and not suffer those that are going in, to enter ” ver 13. They would not enter the palace of Pilate upon the feast day, for fear of defiling themselves, as he was a heathen ; but they thought nothing of accusing the Son of God falsely, and condemning him to the death of the cross. Such then was the mistaken justice of the Pharisees in this point.

(2.) They were careful to avoid the outward crimes, which were expressly forbidden by the law, but they took no care to cleanse their hearts from the internal crimes of bad thoughts, hurtful desires, covetous wishes, anger, hatred, malice, envy, revenge, and the like ; for which reason our Saviour says to them, “ Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, be-
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cause you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of extortion and uncleanness You are like the whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and all filthiness. So you also, outwardly indeed, appear to men just, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Matt. xxiii. 25. You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you escape the judgment of hell? ver. 33.

(3.) They were filled with pride and self-conceit, and when they did any thing good in itself, they attributed it all to themselves, and to their own strength, taking all the praise to themselves, and not giving glory to God; hence they were self-conceited, arrogant, vain boasters of their own works, and despisers of others.—Thus the proud Pharisee, that went up to the temple to pray, exalted himself, on account of some good things he did, above all other men, and particularly above the humble publican, who with a contrite heart was crying for mercy at the same time; and on account of this pride Jesus Christ declared, that with all his good works he was condemned in the sight of God.

(4.) They did all their works to be seen and praised by men; they cared little or nothing whether or not they pleased God, provided they pleased the world, and got the applause and esteem of men. Matt. xxiii. 5. When they gave alms, "they sounded the trumpet before them . . . that they might be honoured by men." When they prayed, they spoke much, and "stood praying in the streets and synagogues, that they might be seen by men;" when they fasted, "they disfigured their faces, that they might be seen by men to fast." Matt. vi. But for this reason our Saviour declared, that they could get no reward from God in heaven, for all their pretended good works, but had already received their reward in the applause of the world, which they sought for.

From this we see in what manner we are obliged to keep the commandments of God, and what is

required of us, that our justice may exceed that of the Pharisees, and entitle us to a place in the kingdom of heaven, which theirs was incapable of acquiring; for (1.) We must keep the whole law, and perform all the duties prescribed by it, great and small; we must not lay a stress on small matters and neglect the greater duties, neither must we neglect small duties, from the vain pretence, that they are of little consequence. "Those things you ought to do, and not to leave these others undone," says Christ himself; and, "He that neglects small things, shall fall by little and little," as the wise man assures us: We must be particularly careful not to let ourselves be so blinded by our passions and depraved affections, as not to see the malice of those things which flatter and please them, and by that means overlook them; but we must carefully observe whatever the divine law prescribes; for "whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all," Ja. ii. 10. (2.) We must not only be exact in performing all the external duties which the law ordains, and in abstaining from all those exterior crimes which it forbids, but we must be equally careful in purifying our hearts, and cleansing all the inward affections of the soul, never dwelling in our thoughts upon any thing that is sinful, much less taking any pleasure in such thoughts, or consenting to them, or desiring any unlawful object, well knowing that "perverse thoughts separate from God," Wiid. i. 3. and that not only those who do evil actions, are "worthy of death, but also they who consent to those who do them," Rom. i. 32. (3.) We must accompany our obedience with a profound humility, firmly persuaded that of ourselves we can do no good at all, that it is God "who works in us both to will and to accomplish according to his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13. and that all the good we do, is owing to his merciful assistance. And therefore, that all the praise and glory is due to him alone; hence we ought to accompany our obedience with a total diffidence in ourselves, and

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an entire confidence in God, humbly begging his assistance before we begin any thing, and from our heart giving thanks to him when it is ended ; not assuming the praise of any thing to ourselves, nor valuing ourselves in our own mind when any thing succeeds, but sincerely acknowledging, when we have done all, that *we are but unprofitable servants.* (4.) We must have a pure intention in all we do, seeking only to please God by every thing we do in obedience to his will, being well assured that God will reward no actions but such as are done for his sake ; and therefore, “ whether we eat or drink, or whatever else we do, we must do all to the glory of God,” as St. Paul requires, 1 Cor. x. 31.

Q. 13. Are all obliged to know the commands ?

A. Most undoubtedly ; the obligation all lie under of keeping the commands, obliges all at the same time to know them ; because how can they obey what they do not know ? Now we may observe three different degrees of perfection in knowing the commands. (1.) To know the words of the commands by heart ; this is the first and lowest degree of our knowledge of the commands ; it is necessary to be had, but it is to little purpose, if we rest in it, and go no further. (2.) To know the sense and meaning of the words, and the various duties and obligations which are contained in them. This is a great deal more than the former, and most necessary, but not sufficient ; for though we should know ever so perfectly what our duty is, this knowledge, if we rest there, and go no farther, instead of bringing us to heaven, will rather increase our condemnation. (3.) To know the law of God in practice, to love it, to make it the rule of our conduct, and in every thing to act according to its light ; this is the true saving knowledge which we must all study to acquire ; because this alone will bring us to eternal happiness. “ Be ye doers of the word, *says the holy apostle James,* and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves ; . . . for he that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty, and hath

continued therein, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work; this man shall be blessed in his deed." Ja. i. 22. 25. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Rom ii. 13.

Q. 14. By what means can we acquire this practical knowledge of the law?

A. Chiefly by serious and attentive meditation upon the law itself, upon its beauty and excellency, on the strict obligation we have to obey it, and upon the great advantages of keeping it with our whole heart. Thus almighty God, after exhorting us by the mouth of the wise man to this practical knowledge of the law in these words, "My son, keep my commandments, and thou shalt live, and my law as the apple of thy eye," immediately adds, as the means to acquire it, "Bind it upon thy fingers, write it upon the tables of thy heart." Prov. vii. 2. that is, have it always before your eyes, as if it were bound upon your fingers, and let it sink deep into your heart, by serious meditation. And this he ordains still more clearly by his prophet Moses, who says, "These words which I command thee this day, *shall be in thy heart*; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou *shalt meditate upon them* sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising; and thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them in thy entry and on the doors of thy house." Deut. vi. 6. Nothing can be more express than this, nor show more manifestly how much it is our duty frequently, or rather continually, to meditate on the law of God, to have it always before our eyes, and study in every thing to conform ourselves to it. And besides these strong injunctions to do so, we have many promises in scripture of the most ample blessings to encourage us; thus, "Blessed is the man . . . whose will is in the law of the Lord, and *in his law he shall meditate day and night*; he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth

forth its fruit in due season, and his leaf shall not fall off, and all, whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper." Ps. i. 1.

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord: blessed are they *that search his testimonies*, that seek him with their whole heart."

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Q. 15. What are the excellencies of the law of God?

A. They are beautifully described by David in the following words. "The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls: the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones: the justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts: the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves: more to be desired than gold and many precious stones; and sweeter than honey and the honey-comb; for thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward." Ps. xviii. 8.

Q. 16. What are the advantages we reap from keeping the law of God?

A. They are many and excellent; for (1.) By keeping the commands of God, we give him supreme honour and worship, and do him a most acceptable homage, for *obedience is better than sacrifice*; and by this means we discharge the most essential duty we owe to our Creator, and give him the most convincing proof of our love. (2.) We become friends and brethren of all the saints in heaven, who by their obedience to the law of God, arrived securely at the possession of that eternal bliss which they now enjoy. (3.) We become friends and brethren of Jesus Christ, who expressly says, "Whoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. (4.) We become conformed to the image of Christ, who had the law of his Father in the middle of his heart, and *was obedient to death, even the death of the cross*. (5.) In consequence of this, we become friends of the great God himself, and

and are placed in such a particular manner under the protection of his divine providence, that he makes every thing turn out to our greater benefit and advantage, for *all things work together for good to them that love God.* (6.) We become the temples of the ever-blessed Trinity, and are in a special manner beloved by God; for Christ himself says, "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." Jo. xiv. 23. (7.) We are sure that our prayers will be heard to our greatest advantage, for "Whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments." 1 Jo. iii. 22. (8.) We are sure that he will so far bless the work of our hands, or in such manner employ the other resources of his providence, as to supply us with all the necessities of this life, in that measure and proportion which shall be most for the good of our souls: for Jesus Christ himself assures us, that if we "seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, all those things shall be added to us." Matt. vi. 33. and moreover, that he will give us that interior peace and content of mind which the world cannot give, and which will be a comfort and support to us under all the trials and difficulties to which this our mortal pilgrimage is continually exposed. (9.) We shall, if we persevere to the end in our steady obedience to the law of God, obtain a happy death, and the eternal salvation of our souls, for "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Matt. xix. 17.

Q. 17. What then are the great motives that should induce us to a faithful observance of the law of God?

A. Duty and interest.

Q. 18. In what is our duty founded?

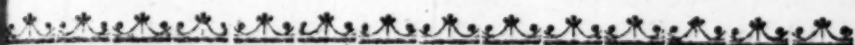
A. Chiefly in two things, *justice* and *gratitude*. Our duty in justice rises from the absolute and supreme dominion which God has over us and over all creatures, as being the work of his own hands, made only for his pleasure, and having a total dependence upon

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upon him. Our duty in gratitude arises from the unspeakable goodness of God, and the love he has for us, and daily shows towards us in the most endearing manner.

Q. 19. How does our own interest oblige us to keep the commandments of God?

A. Because our only true and real happiness, both in this life and in the next, in time and in eternity, depends upon our doing so.



CHAP. II.

*Of the Supreme Dominion of God over us,
and how much we are bound in Justice
to serve him.*

Q. 1. **I**S it necessary to have a proper knowledge of the supreme dominion of God, before we enter upon the explication of his commandments?

A. It is highly proper, and in some degree necessary, considering the corruption of our heart, and its backwardness to obey him; for by having a just sense of his authority and power over us, and being convinced how much it is our indispensable duty to obey him, we shall be stirred up to greater fervour, and a stronger resolution to comply with our duty, and yield to our sovereign Lord the obedience we owe him. And this is what he himself was pleased to do, when he first published his law, for he began by putting his people in mind of his great power and supreme dominion, saying, "I am *the Lord thy God*, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Now in order to form a proper idea of his supreme dominion over us and over all creatures,

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we must both consider his almighty power in itself, and then his authority over us.

§ 1. Of the Almighty Power of God.

Q. 2. By what means can we acquire a proper knowledge of the almighty power of God?

A. By considering the innumerable and stupendous effects which his power has and can produce, and the admirable and inconceivable manner in which he acts in producing them.

Q. 3. What are we chiefly to consider in the effects produced by the power of God?

A. (1.) Their *stupendous greatness*; of which the scripture saith, "He doth things great and incomprehensible, and wonderful, of which there is no number." Job ix. 10. Take a view of the globe of this earth; what an amazing fabrick it is! what immense power must that be which could at first create it? what almighty strength, that could establish it on its solid foundation, adorn it with such a wonderful variety of mountains and vallies, draw out from its bowels these surprizing aqueducts which every where flow through it, and dig that immense and fathomless bason which contains the ocean? What are all the most celebrated works of human power, if compared to this single work of the power of God? and yet this is but a mite to the whole. Raise up your thoughts to the heavenly bodies; consider the sun, that amazing globe of fire, many hundred times larger than the earth itself; take a view of the planets that surround him, of the blazing comets that from time to time approach him; consider the immense regions which these traverse in the course of their rotation, and the inconceivable velocity with which they run their course! beyond these behold the firmament of heaven, amazing sphere! boundless circumference! adorned with innumerable stars, worlds upon worlds! what a stupendous work is all this! what amazing strength that could create it! what unbounded power that con-

continues to preserve and govern it ! Such is the power of the great God whom we serve. He it is " that prepared the earth for evermore, and filled it with cattle and four footed beasts ; he that sendeth forth light, and it goeth ; and hath called it, and it obeyeth him with trembling : and the stars have given light in their watches and rejoiced : they were called, and they said, Here we are : and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to him that made them : This is our God, and there shall no other be accounted of in comparison of him." Bar. iii. 32. " He is thy praise and thy God, that hath done these great and terrible things, which thy eyes have seen." Deut. x. 21. " The firmament on high is his beauty, the beauty of heaven with its glorious shew ; the sun when he appeareth *shewing forth at his rising*, an admirable instrument, *the work of the most high* ! . . . great is the Lord - that made him ! . . . The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven, the Lord *enlighteneth the world* on high. By the words of the holy one they shall stand in judgment, and shall never fail in their watches. Look upon the rainbow, and bless him that made it : it is very beautiful in its brightness. It encompasseth the heaven about with the circle of its glory. *The hands of the most high have displayed it* . . . What shall we be able to do to glorify him ? For the Almighty himself is above all his works. The Lord is terrible and exceeding great, and his power is admirable !" Eccclus. xliii.

(2.) " *Their amazing multitude and variety.*" Who can conceive, or form any idea of the immense variety of the works of God in the creation ? the royal prophet acknowledges with astonishment, that they are beyond all computation. " Thou hast multiplied thy wonderful works, O Lord my God ; *says he*, and in thy thoughts there is no one like to thee : I have declared, and I have spoken, they are multiplied above number." Psa. xxxix. 6. " Look up to heaven, *says Almighty God himself to Abraham*, and number the stars if thou canst." Gen. xv. 5. It is God alone,
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“ who can tell the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names.” Psa. cxlvi. 4. Take a view of this earth on which we dwell; what an amazing variety do we find there of beasts on the earth, of birds in the air, of fishes in the waters, of plants and herbs and trees without number, of insects and creeping things, beyond all comprehension? The same royal prophet, astonished at the sight, cries out with surprize, “ How great are thy works, O Lord, thou hast made all things in wisdom; the earth is filled with thy riches; so is this great sea which stretcheth wide its arms; in it there are creeping things *without number*; creatures little and great.” Psa. ciii. 24. “ There, *says the wise man*, are great and wonderful works, variety of beasts and of all living things, and the monstrous creatures of whales. Through him is established the end of their journey, and by his word all things are regulated.” Eccl. xlii. 27. But what shall we say of the numbers beyond number of those spiritual Beings, of those holy angels who assist continually before the throne of God? “ Is there any numbering of his soldiers?” *says one of Job’s friends*, Job xxv. 3. Oh no! says Daniel, “ Thousands of thousands minister to him, and ten hundred times a hundred thousand stand before him.” Dan. vii. 10. And who was it that created such a vast variety of beings?” “ Look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also.” 2. Maccb. vii. 28. “ Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the birds of the air, and they shall tell thee: speak to the earth, and it shall answer thee; and the fishes of the sea shall tell: who is ignorant that the hand of the Lord made all these things? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the spirit of all flesh of man.” Job xii. But what amazing power must that be, which could produce such numberless beings, and bestow upon each their various powers, faculties, properties and natures? How are we lost in astonishment at the thought

thought? How is our mind bewildered and confounded? "Great are the works of our Lord, sought out according to all his wills; his work is praise and magnificence." *Psa. cx. 2.* "Sing ye a Psalm to his name; give glory to his praise, say unto God, How terrible are thy works, O Lord!... Come and see the works of God, who is terrible in his counsels." *Psa lxxv. 2.* "The Lord is terrible and exceeding great, and his power is admirable." *Eccl. xliii. 31.*

(3.) *The wonderful effects of his power, which he daily performs among all the creatures throughout the universe.* Indeed that immense power of God, which made all things at first, can surely do with them whatever he pleases; in fact his holy word assures us, that "whatsoever the Lord pleases he hath done in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the depths." *Psal. cxxxv. 5.* that "all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before him, and he doth according to his will with the powers of heaven, as among the inhabitants of the earth, and there is none that can resist his hand, or say to him, Why hast thou done it?" *Dan. iv. 32.* And that "at a beck he can destroy the whole world." *2 Macch. viii. 18.* But let us consider the effects of his infinite power, as described in the holy scriptures themselves. "He is wise in heart, *says Job*, and mighty in strength"... *For he it is*, "Who removed mountains, and they whom he overthrew in his wrath knew it not. Who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Who commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and shutteth up the stars as it were under a seal. Who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and walketh upon the waves of the sea." *Job ix.* So also the wise man thus beautifully describes this almighty power of God; "By his commandment he maketh the snow to fall apace, and sendeth forth swiftly the lightnings of his judgment. Through this are the treasures opened, and the clouds fly out like birds. By his greatness he hath fixed the clouds, and the hailstones are broken. At his sight shall the moun-

tains be shaken, and at his will the south wind shall blow. The noise of his thunder shall strike the earth, so doth the northern storm and whirlwind. And as the birds lighting upon the earth he scattereth snow, and the falling thereof is as the coming down of locusts . . . He shall pour frost as salt upon the earth, and when it freezeth, it shall become like the tops of thistles . . . at his word the wind is still, and *with his thought* he appeaseth the deep." Eccl. xliii. "I will destroy, *says God himself*, and swallow up at once; I will lay waste the mountains and hills, and will make all their grass to wither. And I will turn rivers into islands, and will dry up the standing pools. I will lead the blind into the way which they know not, and in the paths which they were ignorant of I will make them to walk; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Isa. xlii. 14. But there is no place where the wondrous works of God are more beautifully described, than in the interrogations which he himself makes to Job upon this subject; for in them such majesty and grandeur appears, that one can scarce peruse them without feeling himself struck with a sacred horror. "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that wrappeth up sentences in unskilful words? Gird up thy loins like a man; I will ask thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measure thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? Upon what are its bases grounded? Or who laid the corner stone thereof? Who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth as issuing out of the womb? When I made a cloud the garments thereof, and wrapt it up in a mist as in swaddling bands, I set my bounds around it, and made it bars and doors. And I said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and shalt go no farther, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves. Didst thou since thy birth command the morning, and show the dawning of the day its place

place? And didst thou hold the extremities of the earth, shaking them, and hast thou shaken the ungodly out of it? . . . hast thou entered into the depths of the sea, and walked in the lowest parts of the deep? Have the gates of death been open to thee, and hast thou seen the darksome doors? . . . Hast thou entered into the storehouses of the snow, or hast thou beheld the treasures of the hail? . . . By what way is the light spread, and the heat divided upon the earth? Who gave a course to violent showers, or a way for noisy thunder? . . . Who is the father of rain, or who begot the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? And the frost from heaven who hath gendered it? The waters are hardened like a stone, and the surface of the deep is congealed. Canst thou bring forth the day star in its time, and make the evening star to rise upon the children of the earth? Dost thou know the order of the heavens, and canst thou set down the order thereof on the earth? Canst thou send lightnings, and will they go? And will they return and say to thee, Here we are? Who hath put wisdom into the heart of man? or who gave the cock understanding? . . . Wilt thou take the prey for the lionsess, and satisfy the appetite of her whelps, when they couch in the dens, and lie in wait in holes? Who provideth food for the raven, when her young ones cry to God, wandering about because they have no meat?" Job xxxix. What a wonderful display is there here of the almighty power of God, and of the amazing things he performs among his creatures? Oh! with what reason does the wise man cry out, "Who is able to declare his works? for who shall search out his glorious acts? and who shall show forth the power of his majesty? Nothing may be taken away nor added; neither is it possible to find out the glorious works of God. When a man hath done, then he shall begin; and when he leaveth off, then he shall be at a loss." Eccl xviii. 2. For God is so great and incomprehensible, that when a man has done all that he can, to find out the greatness of his

power and his boundless perfections, he is still to begin ; for what he has found out, is but a mere nothing in comparison with his infinity.

And indeed, all the wondrous works which God has done, however great and stupendous, what are they all if compared with what he can do ? “ There are many things hidden from us that are greater than these *which we see*, for we have seen but a few of his works.” Eccl. xliii. 36. But there are infinitely more still, and more wonderful things in the boundless womb of *possibility*, which the almighty power of God is able to produce if he pleases : for “ with God all things are possible.” Matt. xix. 26. “ The Lord is as a man of war, almighty is his name.” Exod. xv. 3. Numbers of worlds could he create if he had a mind, in the vast expanse of his immensity, each of them as far superior to the present creation in perfections, as this earth itself is to an ant-hillock. What amazing power then is the power of God ? infinitely above all thought and comprehension ! “ He is great, and does wonderful things ; he is God alone.” Psa. lxxxv. 10.

Q. 4. What effects ought the consideration of this infinite power of God to produce in our souls ?

A. Principally these following, (1.) *It ought to excite us to praise and glorify him with all our powers and affections.* “ Give ye magnificence, *says the holy prophet Moses*, to our God ; the works of God are perfect, and all his ways are judgments.” Deut. xxxii. 3. “ There is none among the gods, *says David*, like to thee, O Lord ; and there is none according to thy works. All the nations thou hast made shall come and adore before thee, O Lord ; and they shall glorify thy name, for thou art great, and dost wonderful things ; thou art God alone.” Psa. lxxxv. 8. “ The heavens shall confess thy wonders, O Lord ; and thy truth in the church of the saints, for who in the clouds can be compared to the Lord ? or who among the sons of God shall be like to God ? God who is glorified in the assembly of the saints, great and terrible

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rible above all them that are about him. O Lord God of hosts, who is like to thee? Thou art mighty, O Lord; and thy truth is round about thee. Thou rulest the power of the sea, and appeasest the motion of the waves thereof . . . thine are the heavens, and thine is the earth; the world and the fulness thereof thou hast founded; the north and the sea thou hast created . . . Let thy hand be strengthened, and thy right hand exalted!" Psa. lxxxviii. 6.

(2.) It ought to produce in us *sentiments of the most profound respect, fear, and reverence towards so mighty a Being.* This the prophet Jeremiah declares, addressing himself to God, in these words, "There is none like to thee, O Lord; thou art great, and great is thy name *in might*. Who shall not fear thee, O king of nations? for thine is the glory; among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. They shall be proved together to be senseless and foolish, a stock is the doctrine of their vanity . . . But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, and the everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his threatening." Jer. x. 6. The saints in heaven are penetrated with fear and reverence, on considering the wonderful works of God, how much more ought we poor mortals? Thus St. John heard these blessed spirits praising God, "Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O king of ages; who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and magnify thy name?" Rev. xv. 3. Even the heathen king Darius, when he saw the wonderful power of God, in delivering Daniel from the lions, immediately sent these orders to all his subjects, "It is decreed by me, that in all my empire and my kingdom, *all men dread and fear the God of Daniel*. For he is the living and eternal God for ever . . . he is the deliverer and the Saviour, doing signs and wonders in heaven and earth." Dan. vi. 26. And no wonder the infinite power of God should produce this fear and dread of

him in our minds, when we reflect what he is, and what we are before him; the wise man proposes to us this consideration, addressing himself to God in these affecting terms, "Great power always belonged to thee alone; and who shall resist the strength of thy arm? for the whole world before thee is as the least grain of the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew, that falleth down upon the earth." Wisd. xi. 22. And Isaiah in a still stronger light proposes to us the same important truth. "Who, *says he*, hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and weighed the heavens with his palm? Who hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath forwarded the spirit of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor, and hath taught him? . . . Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a ballance: behold the islands are as a little dust; . . . all nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as *nothing* and *vanity*." Is. xl. 13. and hence the royal prophet says to God, "Thou art fearfully magnified: wonderful are thy works, and my soul knoweth right well." Ps. cxxxviii. 14.

(3.) This holy fear and dread of God, in order to be agreeable to him, and salutary to our own souls, must be accompanied *with a continual attention to keep his commandments, and a horror at the very thought of offending so great a God by sin*; our obligation to this is a necessary consequence which flows from the almighty power of God, as must evidently appear to every human creature who seriously reflects upon it. Moses was very sensible of this, and makes use of it in a very strong light, to excite his people to fear, love, and serve God. "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart, *says he*, and stiffen your neck no more; because the Lord your God, he is the God of Gods, and the Lord of Lords, a great God and mighty, and terrible, who accepteth no person, nor taketh bribes. . . . Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and

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serve him only; to him thou shalt adhere, and swear by his name. He is thy praise and thy God, that hath done for thee those great and terrible things, which thy eyes have seen. . . . Therefore love the Lord thy God, and observe his precepts and ceremonies, his judgments and commandments at all times."

Deut. x. 16. xi. 1. And indeed, what man in his senses would choose to insult a Being whose almighty power can crush him to atoms, torment him in whatever manner he pleases, or reduce him to nothing in an instant? "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth back again. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, he humbleth, and he exalteth." 1 Kings (Sam.) ii. 6.

"See ye, *says God himself*, that I alone am, and there is no other God besides me: I will kill, and I will make alive, I will strike and will heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. . . . If I shall whet my sword as the lightening, and my hand shall take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to my enemies, and repay them that hate me. I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh, of the blood of the slain and of the captivity, of the bare head of the enemies."

Deut. xxxii. 39. How dreadful must it be to fall into the hands of such a God, who can do what he pleases, and will not spare his enemies? The prophet Jeremiah, confounded at this thought, cries out thus to God, "O most mighty, great and powerful, the Lord of Hosts is thy name: great in counsel, and incomprehensible in thought, whose eyes are upon all the ways of the children of Adam, to render unto every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his devices!" Jer. xxxii. 18. Hear also how the prophet Nahum describes the terrors of his avenging power against his enemies, "The Lord is a jealous God and a revenger; the Lord is a revenger and hath wrath: the Lord take vengeance on his adversaries, and is angry with his enemies. The Lord is patient and great in power, and will not cleanse
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and acquit the guilty. The Lord's ways are in a tempest and a whirlwind, and clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea and drieth it up, and bringeth all the rivers to be a desert. . . . The mountains tremble at him, and the hills are made desolate : and the earth hath quaked at his presence, and the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before the face of his indignation ? and who shall resist in the fierceness of his anger ? his indignation is poured out like fire, and the rocks are melted by him." Nah. i. 1. What a dreadful description is here given us ? how powerful a motive is this to make us obey the commands of this great God with fear and trembling ? What madness and folly is it, what desperate presumption, for man, who is but a worm of the earth, to dare to attack by wilful sin this almighty God, who created the universe ; who holds the thread of his life in his hand, and can in a moment let him drop into hell ? What can he expect by making this God his enemy, but the loss of all good, and the incurring all misery, both for time and eternity ? The moment he engages in this desperate war, the sword of the Almighty is drawn against him, and the perils of death, judgment, and hell on all sides surround him. What madness must it be to be drawn from our allegiance to God, by any thing in this world, whether of its goods or evils ? What folly to be afraid of the weakness of men, and not be afraid of the power of God ? " Fear ye not the reproaches of men, *says God himself*, and be not afraid of their blasphemies, for the worm shall eat them up as garment, and the moth shall consume them as wool, but my salvation shall be for ever, and my justice from generation to generation. . . . Who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a mortal man, and of the son of man that shall wither away like grass ? And thou hast forgotten the Lord thy maker, who stretched out the heavens, and founded the earth. And thou hast been afraid continually all the day at the presence of his fury, who had afflicted thee, and had

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prepared himself to destroy thee : Where is now the fury of the oppressor? . . . but I am the Lord thy God who trouble the sea, and the waves thereof swell ; the Lord of Hosts is my name." II. li. 7. 12. And Christ himself in the gospel draws the same conclusion from the mighty power of God, " I say to you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do : but I will show you whom you shall fear ; fear ye him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say to you, fear him." Luke xii. 4.

(4.) Another noble effect which this wholesome fear of God, when accompanied with a good conscience, naturally produces in our souls, is a *great and firm confidence in the protection of the Almighty*, which is a source of infinite joy and consolation to us, in the midst of all the unavoidable dangers to which we are daily exposed. As nothing is more dreadful than to be at enmity with God, so nothing is more desirable than to be in friendship with him. " If God be for us, who is against us ?" Rom. viii. 31. The holy prophet David, whose heart, as we have seen above, was penetrated with the fear of God, and who was delighted in the way of his testimonies above all riches, who was exercised in his commandments, and meditated upon his justifications." Ps. cxviii. thus expresses the great confidence he had in his divine protection. " Our God is our refuge and strength, a helper in troubles which have found us exceedingly ; therefore we will not fear when the earth shall be troubled, and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea." Ps. xlv. 1. " The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ? the Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid ? while the wicked draw near against me to eat my flesh, my enemies that troubled me, have themselves been weakened and have fallen. If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear ; if a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident." Ps. xxvi. 1.

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Now, whence does this confidence in God arise? Who are those whom God protects? the same royal prophet tells us, "Who is the man, *says he*, that feareth the Lord? he hath appointed him a law in the way that he hath chosen. His soul shall dwell in good things, and his seed shall inherit the land: *the Lord is a firmament to them that fear him.*" Ps. xxiv. 12. God himself confirms the same thing; "To whom, *says he*, shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little and of a contrite spirit, and *that trembleth at my words?*" and a little after he adds, "Hear the word of the Lord, you that tremble at his word; your brethren that hate you, and cast you out for my name's sake . . . they shall be confounded." Is. lvi. 2. 5. and the beloved disciple adds, "Dearly beloved, if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God: and whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him: because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." 1 Jo. iii. 21. What a source of consolation must it be to a soul to be on such a friendly footing with the almighty God, against whose will not a hair of our head can fall to the ground! It was this consideration which supported the valiant Judas, when attacked by most powerful armies, who threatened to destroy the holy place; for when numbers of the people fled away for fear, "he calling together seven thousand that were with him, exhorted them not to fear the multitude of their enemies, who came wrongfully against them, but to fight manfully . . . for, said he, they trust in their weapons, and in their boldness; but we trust in the almighty Lord, who at a beck can utterly destroy both them that come against us, and the whole world!" 2 Macch. viii. 16. and in consequence of this his confidence, he obtained with his handful of men, a most complete victory over all their multitudes.

Q. 5. What do we find of wonderful in the manner in which almighty God exercises his power?

A. If the stupendous effects which his power has produced are so exceedingly amazing, the admirable manner in which he acts is infinitely more so, and infinitely exceeds the comprehension of any created understanding. For (1.) when he performs any work, however great and astonishing it may be, he requires no length of time to compleat it; he does it in an instant: he speaks the word, and immediately the work is done. Consider the vast fabrick of this universe; what a grand production it is; what an infinite variety of beings it contains; "He spoke the word, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created." Ps. cxlviii. 5. "And God said, Be light made, and the light was made. And God said, Let there be a firmament made amidst the waters. And it was so. And God said, Let the waters that are under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear. And it was so done. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and trees yielding fruit, and immediately the earth was covered with all these productions. And God said, Let there be lights made to shine in the firmament of heaven, and to give light upon the earth. And in an instant, the sun and moon, and all the stars appeared." Gen. i. What an amazing power is here displayed! Who can in the smallest degree conceive its greatness! What is all the power of man if compared with this? a mere nothing. The smallest work produced by man, can never be performed but in some length of time, and the greater it is, the more time is required; but God in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, creates the most stupenduous objects!

(2.) When man has any work to do, it costs him toil and labour, he must exert the strength he has, and after a little labour, he must rest to recruit it. But with God it is not so; every thing is easy to him, the greatest as well as the smallest; it costs him no toil, it gives him no fatigue, it requires no exertions; it is enough that he wills it, be what it will, and his all-

all-powerful will is instantly fulfilled ; “ Behold, *says he*, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh : shall *any thing be hard for me?* Jerem. xxxii. 27. No, no, his word alone is sufficient to create in an instant ten thousand worlds. Oh tremendous power ! how is the mind of man confounded at the thought ! Alas ! “ the pillars of heaven tremble and dread at his beck,” Job xxvi. 11. David was amazed when he considered this mighty power, and mentions it with fear and trembling, “ By the *word of the Lord* the heavens were established, and all the power of them *by the spirit of his mouth*. . . Let all the earth fear the Lord, and all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of him ; for *he spoke*, and they were made ; *he commanded*, and they were created ! Psa. xxxii. 6. 8.

(3.) His almighty power depends on no other, it is essential to himself, it is identified with his very nature ; he stands in no need of any one to assist him ; he *alone is powerful*. The world has often admired the power of kings and potentates, who have conquered nations and overturned empires, and been the terror and scourge of their fellow creatures ; but was it by their own personal power they did so ? Was their power inherent in themselves ? By no means : it was by the strength of other men, and of the numerous armies they commanded, that all their famous deeds were performed. But God has no need of such helps, he possesses in himself the plenitude of power, and by his almighty word alone he does whatever he pleases. “ Who is like to me ? *says God himself*, let him call and declare . . Is there a God beside me, a maker whom I have not known ? I am the Lord that make all things, that *alone* stretch out the heavens, that establish the earth, and *there is none with me*, Isa. xlv. 7. 8. 24.

(4.) Even in those works which a man performs by himself, what can he do without the proper tools and instruments ? What can the husbandman do without his plough, or the smith without his hammer ? The soldier without his arms ? Or the mason without

without his trowel? But the great God has no occasion for any such means; his all powerful will stands in stead of all! "By his power the seas are suddenly gathered together, and his wisdom has struck the proud one. His spirit has adorned the heavens, and his artful hand hath brought forth the winding serpent." Job xxvi. 12. "By the word of the Lord, the heavens were established, and all the powers of them by the spirit of his mouth." Psa. xxxii. 6. Now this word of God, this spirit or breath of his mouth, is not like the words of man which require to be pronounced by the lips and tongue, and imply some force used, some exertion made; the word of God is nothing but the internal act of his will, than which nothing can be produced, even by man himself, with greater ease and velocity. This is the three fingers with which *he poizes the bulk of the earth*; this *his palm* with which he *weighs the heavens*, this the *hollow of his hand* in which he *measures the waters*. Isa. xl. 12. this his *right hand*, by which he does such wonderful things: this in a word is his *beck*, at which the pillars of heaven tremble, and with which alone he can destroy the whole world and reduce it again to nothing!

(5.) But what above all other considerations bewilders our imagination, and totally confounds our understanding, is, that the power of God is so amazingly great, and acts in a manner so singular, so immensely different from every thing we know, and so peculiar to itself alone, that it has no need, I don't say, of exertions and efforts, of external helps and instruments, but not even of matter to act upon, which all the works of men presuppose as existing before the smallest thing can be made by them. But it is not so with God; take a view, once more, of all the wonders of the creation, consider the mighty fabric itself, and the innumerable multitude of beings, both spiritual and material, both animate and inanimate that it contains, "Look upon heaven and earth and all that is in them, and consider that God

made them *out of nothing*, and mankind also." 2 Mac. vii. 28. Oh! here indeed we are altogether lost in wonder! what an amazing strength must that be, what incomprehensible power, which can in an instant, without the least labour or toil, by a simple act of the will create, I don't say a grain of sand, or the smallest insect, but innumerable worlds out of *mere nothing*, where there was not the smallest appearance of being, not even the shadow of existence before! How tremendous that almighty Being, whose power operates even upon nothing itself, and who, as St. Paul assures us, "callesth those things that are not, as those that are." Rom. iv. 17. And not only "giveth strength to the weary, but even gives force and might to them that are not!" Isa. xl. 29. How vain does all the strength of man appear, when compared to the power of God! what a mere nothing are the greatest potentates of the earth, when compared to him whose name is *The Almighty*! "Who is like to thee, among the strong, O Lord? who is like to thee, glorious in holiness, terrible and praise worthy, doing wonders?" Excd xv. 11. Thine, O Lord; is magnificence and power, and glory and victory, and to thee is praise; for all that is in heaven and earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art above all princes; thine are riches, and thine is glory, thou hast dominion over all, in thy hand is power and might, in thy hand greatness, and the empire of all things." 1 Chron. xxix. 11.

§ 2. *Of the Supreme Dominion of Jurisdiction which God has over all Creatures.*

Q. 6. What is understood by *dominion*?

A. These words, *strength*, *power* and *dominion*, have each their proper signification. *Strength*, properly signifies that personal force, vigour or ability, which one possesses in himself, and by which he can produce certain effects. *Dominion* signifies that right,

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title or authority, which one has to exert his strength on other beings. *Power* signifies both the one and the other ; but whereas *strength*, more properly signifies personal abilities, whether of body or mind, which is intrinsecal to the person in whom it resides ; *power* also, signifies these extrinsecal abilities which one has from the help of others joined with him ; as the power which kings have, by means of their armies, or which is found in different states joined together in league or society. We have seen how infinitely great the strength and power of God is, which he possesses in himself alone, and by which he can do whatever is possible to be done in heaven, in earth, and in all creatures, and even in mere nothing. We now come to consider his dominion over all things, or that supreme authority, that unlimited right, which he has, to use his Almighty power over all his creatures, in whatever manner he pleases.

Q. 7. How many kinds of dominion are there ?

A. Two kinds ; the dominion of *jurisdiction*, and the dominion of *property*.

Q. 8. What is the *dominion of jurisdiction* ?

A. The dominion of jurisdiction is the authority and right that one has to govern others, to lay commands upon them, to make laws, and to enforce obedience to his commands and laws, by rewards and punishments. This is the dominion which is competent to lords, kings, and potentates, and to all who possess any lawful authority over others. It always implies a corresponding obligation upon the subjects, to obey the laws and perform the commands of such lawful superiors.

Q. 9. Has God this dominion of jurisdiction over all creatures ?

A. All possible dominion over all creatures essentially belongs to God, and his dominion over them both of jurisdiction and property, is an absolute dominion, perfectly complete, and without all exception or limitation ; it is also an inalienable dominion, and so essentially belongs to him, that it can never be weakened

weakened or diminished, nor is it possible for any creature ever to withdraw itself from its subjection to him.

Q. 10. To what does the dominion of jurisdiction, which God has over his reasonable creatures, extend?

A. It extends to all such creatures, and to every thing they are capable of doing; for (1.) It embraces all intelligent beings, whether angels or men; from the most sublime spirit in heaven, to the lowest of the human race, from the king upon the throne, to the poorest beggar; for he is "the only *Mighty*, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." 1 Tim. vi. 15. "Bless the Lord, *says David*, all ye his angels, you that are mighty in strength, and *execute his word, hearkening to the voice of his orders*. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, *you ministers of his that do his will*." Ps. cii. 20. "Thine, O Lord, *says Solomon*, is magnificence and power . . . thou art above all princes . . . in thy hand is greatness and the empire of all things." 1 Chron. xxix. 11. (2.) His authority over all these intelligent beings, extends to every thing whatsoever that he pleases to require of them; there is no action of theirs so indifferent in itself, but that he can make it the matter of a law, and require their obedience to it, under the severest penalty; his divine will is the supreme rule of all righteousness, which every reasonable creature is indispensably obliged to obey. (3.) His divine authority, extends to all manner of punishments; which he has the most unlimited right to inflict upon those who presume to disobey him, of whatever kind, in whatever manner, and to whatever extent, his infinite wisdom and justice shall judge proper. "Who shall say to thee, O God, what hast thou done? or who shall withstand thy judgment? Or who shall come before thee, to be a revenger of wicked men? Or who shall accuse thee, if the nations perish, which thou hast made? For there is no other God but thou . . . neither shall king nor tyrant in thy sight, enquire about them whom thou hast destroyed. Wis. xii. 12. Hence when God gave the law to his people,

people, he began by these tremendous words, **I AM THE LORD THY GOD**, to put them in mind of his supreme dominion over them, and of the unrelierved obedience which they essentially owed to him : and for the same reason, in many places of the law, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of Leviticus, he frequently intersperses these words, *I am the Lord*, and ends the whole with this clause, “ Keep all my precepts, and all my judgments and do them. *I am the Lord.*” Levit. xix. 37. Shewing that this alone was sufficient to engage their obedience to every thing that he had commanded them, and to obviate every difficulty, which their self-love, senses or reason could suggest to the contrary.

Q. 11. How does this dominion of God extend to the irrational and the inanimate creatures ?

A. Here indeed, the sovereign authority of the Almighty shines forth in the most splendid manner ; for his dominion over the irrational and inanimate creatures, makes those beings sensible to his commands, though in themselves they have no sense, and procures the most exact and perfect obedience, even from those who have no understanding. His power and authority over them is such, that he may command them whatever he pleases, and whatever he commands them, his commands are instantly obeyed, “ Praise the Lord, *says the royal prophet*, from the earth, ye dragons and all ye deeps, fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds, *which fulfil his word.* Psa. cxlviii. 7. “ Thou hast founded the earth, and it continueth : by thy ordinance the day goeth on ; for *all things serve thee.*” Psa. cxviii. 91. “ O Adonai Lord, great art thou, and glorious in thy power, and no one can overcome thee. Let all thy creatures serve thee ; because thou hast spoken and they were made, thou didst send forth thy spirit and they were created, and there is no one that can resist thy voice : the mountains shall be moved from the foundations with the waters, the rocks shall melt as wax before thy face.” Judith xvi. 16.

Q. 12. Are there any particular examples in scripture of this ready obedience in these creatures to the commands of God?

A. Yes, there are great numbers, besides those that happened at the creation, which we have seen above, Q. 5. No. (1.) Thus Jesus Christ said to the leper, "I will; be thou clean, and immediately his leprosy was cleansed." To the good Centurion, who with so great faith acknowledged this his sovereign dominion over all creatures, he made this reply, "As thou hast believed, so be done unto thee: and his servant, who was lying at home sick of the palsy, was healed at the same hour." When the disciples were overtaken at sea by a violent tempest, "rising up he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm; but the men wondered, saying, What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him? Matt. viii. When St. Peter's mother in law was "taken with a great fever, he commanded the fever and it left her." Luke iv. 39. With many other instances of the like nature, of which the holy scriptures are full. And what is still more surprising, all these creatures give him this ready obedience, not only when he speaks to them himself in person, but even when he gives them his orders by the mouth of his holy servants, who command them in his name; witness the great and wondrous things performed by Moses and the other prophets, and particularly that of Joshua, who commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed him; and the wonderful cure of the lame man by St. Peter, when he said: "in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk . . . and forthwith his feet and soles received strength, and he leaping up, stood and walked, and went in with them to the temple, walking and leaping and praising God." Acts iii. 6 To show the same supreme dominion of the Almighty over the inanimate creatures, the scripture says, "He sendeth forth the light, and it goeth; he hath called it, and it obeyeth him with trembling. . . The stars were called

called, and they said, Here we are, and with chearfulness they have shined forth to him that made them." Bar. iii. 33. What amazing power! What prodigious dominion is this! of whose commands nothing is insensible, to whose orders no creature makes resistance, and whose authority is felt, is understood, and obeyed by the whole creation! How absolute! How unlimited is this divine dominion!

Q. 13. How is this dominion of God *essential* to him?

A. The meaning of that is, that the supreme dominion which God possesses, he has from himself alone; it did not fall to him by lot, he did not receive it by inheritance, it was not given him by another, he did not acquire it by violent invasion, nor did he receive it from the election and by the consent of his subjects: he possesses it from himself alone, it is essential to his nature, it is intrinsically due to his infinite perfections, he possesses it in his own right, because he alone is essentially worthy of it, and because all things are the work of his hands; hence, "The four and twenty antients fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and adore him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, *Thou art worthy*, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and *power*; because thou hast created all things, and for thy will they are, and have been created." Rev. iv. 10. and again, "I beheld, *says St John*, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the antients: and the number of them were thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive *power*, and divinity, and wisdom, and *strength*, and honour, and glory, and benediction. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard all saying, To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honour, and glory, and *power*, for ever and ever."

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Rev. v. 11. In another place he gives us a most awful description of this supreme Lord of all, who was pleased to appear to him in all the glories of his majesty; in these words; "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called *Faithful and True*, and with justice does he judge and fight. And his eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he had a name written which no man knoweth but himself. And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called, **THE WORD OF GOD**. And the armies that are in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean. And out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, that with it he may strike the Gentiles. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine press of the fierceness of the wrath of God the almighty: And he hath on his garment and on his thigh written, **KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS**." Rev. xix. 11. In which glorious name, written upon his garment and on his thigh, it is clearly declared, that sovereign and universal dominion essentially belongs to him alone; for as the scripture declares of God that, *almighty is his name*, Exod. xv. 3. because almighty power essentially belongs to him; so here he carries the awful name of *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, because he no less essentially possesses the most absolute dominion over all creatures.

Q. 14. What is meant by saying *this supreme dominion of God is inalienable*?

A. This is a necessary consequence of its being *essential to him*, and means that this supreme dominion over all creatures can never be diminished, can never be restrained, can never be lost or taken from him; he can no more cease to have it, than he can cease to be God, and creatures can no more cease to be subject to him, than they can cease to be creatures; hence he is called in scripture, the God of dominion, for thus the wise man says, "There is

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one most high Creator almighty, and a powerful King, and greatly to be feared, who sitteth upon his throne, and is **THE GOD OF DOMINION.**" Eccclus. 8. For this reason his dominion, like himself, is an eternal dominion, and must remain for ever and ever; "Thy kingdom, *says David*, is a kingdom of all ages, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." Pf. cxliv. 13. "His power is an everlasting power, and his kingdom is to all generations: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before him, for he doth according to his will, as well with the powers of heaven, as among the inhabitants of the earth, and there is none that can resist his hand, and say to him, Why hast thou done it?" Dan. iv. 31. "And all people, tribes, and tongues, shall serve him: his power is an everlasting power, that shall not be taken away; and his kingdom, that shall not be destroyed." Dan. vii. 14. and therefore, "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Tim. i. 17.

Q. 15. What effects ought the consideration of this supreme dominion of God, to produce in our souls?

A. Chiefly these two. (1.) *A most profound humility, a reverential awe and dread of his infinite majesty.* This is what St. Peter most earnestly recommends to all, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God." 1 Pet. v. 6. And St. Paul in like manner says, "Let us serve pleasing God, with fear and reverence; for our God is a consuming fire." Heb. xii. 28. And indeed if so great veneration is shown to the majesty of earthly kings and potentates, which is scarce a shadow of majesty, if compared with God; if their subjects tremble and are confounded in their presence, so as sometimes to be unable to speak a word before them; with what sentiments of veneration, with what profound respect ought our hearts to be penetrated in the
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presence of the most high God, the most august majesty of the increated, all-powerful King of heaven and earth? With what reverential dread and awe ought we to be overwhelmed, every time we call to mind his divine presence? every time we hear his adorable name pronounced? "Hear, O foolish people, *says he himself*, and without understanding; Will you not then fear me saith the Lord?" Jerem. v. i. *Me!* who am the King of kings, and Lord of Lords. *Me!* who have the universe for my kingdom; all creatures for my subjects; for my throne, immensity; for my sceptre, omnipotence; for my diadem, eternity; for my soldiers, thunders and lightening, tempests and deluges, famines, plagues, and earthquakes; *Me!* whose anger none can resist; *Me!* who have your life in my hand, and can destroy you whenever I please; who have the whole world in my power, and can reduce it to nothing in an instant; *Me!* so tremendous a prince, and you worms of the earth, my creatures, my vassals, my slaves! and will you not fear me? "If I be your master, where is my fear, saith the Lord of hosts?" Malach. i. 6. O great God, truly "There is none like to thee, O Lord; thou art great, and great is thy name in might. *Who shall not fear thee, O King of nations?* for thine is the glory: among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms there is none like unto thee" . . . for "the Lord is the true God: he is the living God and the everlasting King: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his threatening." Jer. x. 6. 10. "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket before him, and are accounted as the smallest grain of a balance. . . . All the nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity." Is. xl. 15. 17. "What then is man, *O Lord*, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Ps. viii. 5. "What is the number of my days, that I may know what is wanting to me? Behold thou hast made my days

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days measurable, and my substance is as nothing before thee; and indeed all things are vanity; every man living." Ps. xxxviii. 5. And shall this vanity, this nothing dare to set up its crest, and walk with a high head and a stretched out neck, in the presence of the Almighty? Alas! how miserable a delusion would this be! "For if any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Gal. vi. 3. and how fatal is his deception, by which the great almighty God becomes his declared enemy, and threatens him with utter ruin and destruction! "If his pride mount up even to heaven, and his head touch the clouds, in the end he shall be destroyed like a dunghill, and they that had seen him shall say, Where is he? as a dream that fleeth away he shall not be found, he shall pass as a vision of the night." Job xx. 6. And why so? "Behold I am against thee, O proud man, saith *the Lord, the God of hosts*, for the day is come, the time of thy visitation; and the proud one shall fall, he shall fall down, and there shall be none to lift him up; and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him." Jerem. l. 31. Wherefore let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, who resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." 1 Pet. v. 6.

(2.) The other effect which the supreme dominion of almighty God ought to produce in us, is a *continual attention to do his will, and exactly to obey his holy commandments*. Our obligation to this is a necessary consequence of his dominion and authority over us; and this obligation is so great, that no power in heaven or earth can exempt us from it; we can no more cease to be strictly obliged to obey the commands of God, than we can cease to be his creatures; this obligation is as essential to us, as his sovereign dominion is to him. And the necessity we lie under of complying with it is so absolute, that we have nothing to expect but ruin and destruction, devastation and misery, if we refuse to obey him, and
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rebel against him. All which will still more clearly appear, if we consider attentively, (1.) *That we are his creatures*; whatever we are, whatever we have, we are altogether the work of his hands; he created us, and he created us out of nothing: consequently he has the most absolute power over us, and the most incontrovertible right to our obedience, and to every possible service we can do to him; and of course we are strictly obliged in every thing without exception to serve him and obey him. Moses speaks with astonishment of the sins of his people, precisely as being an infringement of this supreme title that God has to our obedience as our creator, and considers their disobedience as the greatest folly. "Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is not he thy Father that made thee, and possessed thee and created thee? . . . Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee!" Deut. xxxii. 6. 18. What obligation can any man have, to obey those who have dominion over him in this world, equal, or comparable to what we owe to God as our creator? or what right can any earthly superior have to the service and obedience of those under him, equal or comparable to the title that the creator has to the service of his creatures? What is the authority of parents over their children, masters over their servants, kings over their subjects, if compared to the authority which God has over all creatures? Alas! all earthly dominion, and all the obedience due to it, is but adventitious, accidental, partial, and temporal; but the dominion of the creator, and our obligation to obey him, is essential, indefeasible, universal, and eternal. If therefore it be a great injury to earthly superiors, when their subjects disobey their lawful commands, who can conceive the unparelled injury done to the almighty creator, when we worms of the earth refuse to obey him, and transgress his sacred laws? What greater title can a man have to the use and service of any thing, than to that of the

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work of his own hands? The gardener has a perfect right to the fruits of his garden; the husbandman to the produce of his land; the builder of a house on his own property, to the use and rents of the house which he builds; the merchant to the profits of his commerce: Now we are wholly the handywork of God; he made us what we are, he created our very substance out of nothing, every thing we have belongs to him, we are altogether his undoubted property; how incontestable then must his right be to all service and obedience from us! and how great our obligation to serve and obey him!

But (2.) We must further consider, that God by his almighty power, not only created us, but he *still continues by the same almighty power every moment to preserve us*; in so much that should he withdraw his hand from us for an instant, that instant we would immediately return to our primitive *nothing*: for as the light of the day so essentially depends upon the sun, that if the sun should cease to shine, that instant light would cease to exist; so we and all we have so essentially depend upon the continual preservation of God, that the moment he should cease to preserve us, we should cease to be: for "he upholdeth all things by the word of his power." Heb. i. 3. "By him all things consist." Col. i. 17. And "how could any thing endure, *says the wise man to God*, if thou wouldest not? or be preserved if not called by thee?" Wisd. xi. 26. God is a self-existent, necessary, and indefectible Being, perfectly sufficient for himself, and absolutely independent of any other; but we and all creatures have no being of ourselves, we are nothing, and of ourselves always tend to nothing, and continually depend upon him for our very existence. How immensely does this increase our subjection to him, and our strict obligation to serve and obey him? And as we wholly depend upon him for our existence, so we equally depend upon him for every thing else without exception. It is God "who covereth the heaven with clouds, and
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prepareth rain for the earth ; who maketh grafs to grow on the mountains, and herbs *for the service of man* ; who giveth to beasts their food, and to the young ravens, who call upon him." Pf. cxlvi. 8. And therefore, " The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord, and thou givest them meat in due season ; thou openest thy hand, and fillest with thy blessing every living creature." Pf. cxliv. 15. " What thou givest to them, they shall gather up ; when thou openest thy hand, they shall all be filled with good : but if *thou turnest away thy face*, they shall be troubled ; thou shalt *take away their breath*, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust." Pf. ciii. 28. See here what an immense dependence we have upon God for every thing, and consequently how immense our obligation is to serve and obey him. Nay, whatever powers or faculties we have, whether of soul or body, are all the work of the great God ; they are given us by him, he can take them from us when he pleases, and they so essentially depend upon him, that without his concurrence we could not exercise them, no, not for a moment ; " Without me, says Jesus Christ, *you can do nothing*." Jo. xv. not so much as think a thought, nor speak a word, nor move either hand or foot. If a house be once built by the builder, it stands in no further need of the workman's hand for its preservation ; if the seed be once thrown into the ground, it stands in no further need of the sower for its growth and the production of its fruit ; if a watch be once finished by the workman, and wound up, it suffices by itself to continue its motion ; but we have such an absolute dependence upon the hand that made us, that we can neither exist, nor increase, nor act, nor move, without his continual conservation and assistance. Who can conceive the extent of this total dependence we have on him ? Judge then how immense our obligation must be to serve and obey him !

Yet this is not all ; for (3.) *the very end for which we have our being, the design that God had in creat-*
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ing us, and for which he made and preserves us, is, to serve and obey him. Our blessed Saviour says of himself, "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of him that sent me."

Jo. vi. 38. And it is no less true of us, That we were created by almighty God, and are placed by him in this world, not to do our own will, but the will of him that created us. God created this world and all things in it, not out of any necessity, nor through force, but out of his own free choice, because he was pleased to do so, and for such ends and uses as he thought proper to assign to every creature, that all might concur in their respective spheres to this ultimate and supreme end, to give him pleasure and glory. "Every one, says he, that calleth upon my name, I have created him for my glory." If. xliii. 2.

And every creature promotes this glory of the creator by faithfully performing those effects for which he made them; Thus the sun was created to glorify God by giving light and heat, the water by serving to cool and refresh, the earth by producing nourishment to man and beasts, and man was created to glorify God, by serving and obeying him. This is the very end of his being; he has no existence but for this purpose. But what an infinite obligation does this lay him under to comply with his end! How indispensable is his duty to serve and obey his creator! Whatever is destined for any particular end, and for that alone, if either it does not, or cannot comply with that end, it is good for nothing, it is to no purpose at all. If the sun should cease to give light and heat, the water to cool and refresh, or the earth to produce meat for man and beast, what would be the use of them? to what purpose would they serve? they might as well not be at all. So man, if he refuses to serve and obey God, is good for nothing; whatever he does else, is to no purpose. He is like an abortive, a mere nuisance in the eyes of his creator. And on the other hand, as every thing is the more perfect in its kind and the more excellent

and valuable, the more perfectly it accomplishes the end of its being ; so the more perfectly man complies with the noble end for which he is created, by serving and obeying God, the more excellent and perfect he is : and hence the wise man, after a long discourse on the ways of man, draws this conclusion, " Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is all man." Eccl. xii. 13. that is, his whole business, his whole duty, his highest perfection, his only happiness, *his all !*

Add to all this, (4.) The absolute necessity we all lie under, of complying with this end of our being, by serving and obeying God, seeing otherwise it is impossible for us to escape the dismal effects of his justice and vengeance ; " The Lord hath made all things for himself." Prov. xvi. 4. that is, for his own pleasure and glory ; this is the great, the supreme, the ultimate end which the Almighty has in view in all his works ; and in the accomplishment of this, it is impossible he should be ever disappointed ; to this great end we must all unavoidably contribute, whether we will or not, for endless eternities ; we can no more be dispensed with this, than we can cease to be creatures ; but here lies the great, the dreadful difference ; if we cheerfully comply with the immediate end of our being in this life, by carefully serving him and keeping his commandments, we shall be happy for all eternity, in the enjoyment of God himself in heaven, glorifying his infinite goodness and mercy ; but if we refuse to serve and obey him here, we shall be condemned to the eternal torments of hell hereafter, there for ever to exalt and glorify his justice. One of the two must unavoidably be our fate ; glorify him we must, whether we will or not ; and there is no escaping this alternative of glorifying him, either in heaven as trophies of his mercy, or in hell as victims of his eternal vengeance ; by serving and obeying him here we shall secure the former ; but if we disobey his holy commandments here, the latter must be our fate for ever ! For God is a " God, whose

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whose wrath no man can resist, and under whom they stoop that bear up the world." Job ix. 13. "Thou art terrible, *says David to him*, and who can resist thee from the time that thy wrath shall break out? Thou hast caused judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth trembled and was still." Psa. lxxv. Neither is it possible for sinners to fly from his avenging justice. "There shall be no flight for them, *says God himself*, and I will slay the last of them with the sword. They shall flee, and he that shall flee of them shall not be delivered. Though they go down even to hell, thence shall my hand bring them out; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they be hid in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them away from thence; and though they hide themselves from my eyes in the depth of the sea, there will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: and if they go in to captivity before their enemies, there will I command the sword, and it shall kill them. And I will set my eyes upon them for evil, and not for good." Amos ix. 1. Oh! how terrible it is to fall into the hands of this avenging God! How great then our obligation to serve and obey him!

§ 3. *Of God's Dominion of Property over all Creatures.*

Q 16. What is the *Dominion of Property*?

A. It is the authority and right, which one has to the possession and use of any thing that belongs to him: so that no other can deprive him of it without a crime; and he himself is at full liberty to use it as he pleases; to sell it, to give it away, to consume it, to destroy it, or any other way dispose of it, without being accountable to any one for his conduct. This kind of dominion belongs to every man, with regard to those things which are entirely his own property.

Q. 17. Has God this dominion of property over all creatures?

A. He has in the most unlimited manner; so that they and every thing that belongs to them, are wholly and inalienably the property of God; he is their sole lord and master, he can do with them what he pleases; none can hinder him, none can resist him, nor can any one find fault with him for whatever he does, or say to him, Why dost thou so? He is absolute and independent in whatever way he chooses to treat them; he is accountable to none for his conduct towards them. This the royal prophet humbly acknowledges in these terms, "Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, from eternity to eternity. Thine, O Lord, is magnificence and power, and glory and victory, and to thee is praise; *for all that is in heaven and in earth is thine*; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art above all princes: thine are riches and thine is glory; thou hast dominion over all, in thy hand is power and might; in thy hand, greatness, and the empire of all things." 1 Chr. xxix. 10. This dominion of God, the haughty Nabuchadnefor confessed in the most humble manner, in these words, after having experienced the effects of it to his cost, "And I praised and glorified him who liveth for ever and ever; for his power is an everlasting power, and his kingdom is to all generations; All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before him; for *he doth according to his will*, as well with the powers of heaven, as among the inhabitants of the earth; and there is none that can resist his hand, or say to him, Why hast thou done it?" Dan. iv. 32. This also was a source of comfort and confidence to the good Mordecai; for when he and all the people of Israel were upon the brink of destruction from the malice of the wicked Haman, he had recourse to God for deliverance, and began his prayer in this manner, "O Lord God, Almighty King, *for all things are in thy power, and there is none that can resist thy will*, if thou

thou determine to save Israel. Thou hast made heaven and earth, and all things that are under the cope of heaven: Thou art Lord of all, and there is none that can resist thy majesty." Est xiii. 9.

Q. 18. On what is this Dominion of Property, which Almighty God has over all creatures, founded?

A. On the same grounds with his dominion of jurisdiction, to wit, his being our Creator, our preserver, and our last end. And indeed (1) with regard to our creation and conservation, who does not see what an immense right this gives to God to do with us whatever he pleases? what greater property can one have in any thing, than in the work of his own hands? If a painter makes a picture, if a sculptor makes a statue, if an artist of any kind makes such a piece of work as is proper to his art, if they make these things of their own materials and for themselves, have they not full power over, them, to do with them what they please? If the painter should tear or burn his picture, if the sculptor should grind his statue to powder, or throw it into the sea, could any one find fault with them for doing so, or call them to an account for their conduct? the ready answer of each would be, *It is my own, I can do with it what I please.* Or could the picture itself, or the statue, if they had sense, complain of such treatment? If they did, the ready answer would be by him that made them, What injury have I done you? you had your being as a picture, or statue from me; it was my own, and cannot I take my own again from you when I please? And what reply could be made to these answers? Now if this be unexceptionably the very nature of property, and especially over the works of one's own hands, who can conceive the supreme power that God has over us from this consideration of his being our Creator? and still more from the continual and essential dependance we have on him as our conservator? Though the painter lays on the colours on canvas, and makes the figure and form of the picture, yet he did not make
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the colours themselves, nor give the canvas its existence: though the sculptor cuts and carves the wood or stone, and forms it into the figure of a man, yet he did not create the substance of the wood, nor give being to the stone; but the great God not only gives us the figure and form we have, and whatever else we possess, but he gives us our very substance, our very existence, our being; And he makes us what we are, not out of any matter independent on him, but he creates the very matter itself of which we are composed, *out of nothing!* We have nothing but what is wholly his gift, and as we cannot subsist one instant without him, so we and all that we have, and all things else, still continue his absolute property, and wholly dependent upon him. Consequently whatever way he is pleased to treat us, he can do us no injury; If he bestows any gift or benefit upon us, it is the effect of his pure liberality, without any right or title on our part to receive it; and in giving it to us he does not give up his property to it, but can, without the least shadow of injustice, take it from us when he wills. If he bestows his gifts more upon one than another, who can find fault with him? he does no injury to those that receive less. "Is it not lawful for me, *says he*, to do with my own what I will"? Matt. xx. 15. What do I owe you, what did I ever receive from you, "Who hath given me before, that I should repay him? All things that are under heaven are mine?" Job. xli. 2. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts." Hag. ii. 9. "Behold the heaven is the Lord thy God's, and the heaven of heaven, the earth and all things that are therein." Deut. x. 14. "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and he will give it to whomsoever it shall please him, and he will appoint the basest man over it." Dan. iv. 14. In like manner if he shall reduce us to poverty, afflict us with pain, oppress us with sickness, overwhelm us with miseries, who shall dare to complain? or who has a right to

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oppose him? "Cannot I do with you as the potter, O house of Israel, saith the Lord? Behold, as clay is in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel." Jerem. xviii. 6. "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Or hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel into honour, and another into dishonour?" Rom. ix. 20. "The potter tempering soft clay, with labour fashioneth every vessel for our service, and of the same clay he maketh both vessels that are for clean uses, and likewise such as serve to the contrary; but what is the use of these vessels the potter is the judge." Wisd. xv. And who shall then dare to find fault with the Almighty, whatever way he shall be pleased to treat us?" Woe to him that gainsayeth his Maker, a sherd of the earthen pots: shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What art thou making? and thy work is without hands?" Isa. xlv. 9.

But (2.) This will still further appear, if we reflect on what we have seen above, that we are created only for God, that we have our existence only for his service and pleasure, that the very end of our being is only to do his will. Thus all the saints in heaven continually cry out to him, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and *for thy pleasure* they are, and were created." Rev. iv. 11. This being the only end of our existence, necessarily carries along with it such an absolute, intrinsecal and perpetual subordination on our part to his will and pleasure, that to what he will with us, demand what service he pleases from us, cost what it may to accomplish his will, we can never have reason to complain, as if he did us any wrong, or demanded too much from us; for how can we complain for being employed, or used in that for which alone we were created, and for which alone we have any being at all? And hence if he should

should be pleased to overturn the whole world, to annihilate all creatures, to reduce us to ashes, who can find fault with him for it? He only uses his own indefeasible right; creatures have their being only for his pleasure, and whatever his pleasure is to do with them, he has the most just and essential title and right to do it. Hence "if he shall overturn all things, or shall press them together, who shall contradict him?" Job xi. 10. and, "If he examine on a sudden, who shall answer him? or who can say, Why dost thou so?" Job ix. 12. But to put this matter in its proper light, let us consider the right that man has to use all the inferior creatures as he pleases, precisely because they were created for his use and service. For when God proposed to create man, he said "Let us create man to our image and likeness; and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air, and the beasts and the whole earth, and every creeping thing that moveth upon the earth." And when he had created him, he gave him this dominion in these words, "Rule over the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth. Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed upon the earth, and all trees that have in themselves seed of their own kind, to be your meat." Gen. i. 26. Here then we see that the common creator of all things was pleased to make these inferior creatures for the use of man; that this is the immediate end of their being, and consequently he has received from his maker a dominion of property over them. Now how does he use this right? He uses it every way he pleases, in whatever manner he sees it can contribute to his service, conveniency, pleasure or amusement, without paying the smallest regard to any suffering, oppression or pain, to which his doing so may expose these poor creatures themselves. Some of them he deprives of their natural liberty for his amusement; he uses one kind of them to hunt after, pursue and kill others for his diversion; some he loads with

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heavy burdens for his service ; others he condemns to hard and daily labour for his work ; nay others he kills and skins and cuts into pieces, and devours their very flesh for his food. Now if by using them in this manner, he does them no injury, if he only uses his own right given him by their and his own common creator, although he neither be the author of their being, nor the ultimate end for which they were created, and although the right he has to their service be not essential to him, but given him by another ; how infinitely greater right has the supreme lord of all, to dispose of us as he pleases, and do with us whatever he wills, seeing we have our very being from him, and that the ultimate, essential and necessary end of our being is to serve and please him ? There is an infinitely greater distance between God and man, than between man and the meanest insect ; and he has an infinitely stronger right to do with us what he pleases, than we can possibly have to do according to our will with the most worthless of the creatures. And though he should require the most severe service from us, tho' he should command us to be burnt alive or crucified for his honour, we could have no more reason to complain of him as imprudent, unjust, or cruel for doing so, than the ox or the sheep could complain of us for cutting their throats and eating them. The best answer to such complaints from them, would be, that they were made for our use, and have their being for that end ; and the same answer, but with infinitely greater reason, Almighty God would make to any such complaints from us, *You have your being for no other end but to contribute to my pleasure !*

Q. 19. What consequences flow from this supreme dominion of property which God has over us ?

A. A great and most important duty flows as a necessary consequence from this truth, namely, that we ought not only to be penetrated with an awful dread and reverential fear of this tremendous sovereign, who has us so absolutely in his power, and on whom we so essentially depend ; that we ought not only to make

make it the whole study and the continual employment of our life to please and serve him, by faithfully obeying his commandments, which is the very end for which he gives us our being; but also that amidst all the sufferings and crosses, which he may be pleased to send upon us in this our mortal life, of whatever kind they may be, and from whatever immediate source they may flow, we should preserve our souls in a perfect resignation to his holy will, receive them with all submission from his hand, and suppress every motion of discontent, repining, or murmuring at them. We ought to remember, that he alone is our absolute lord and master and that in whatever way it is his will and pleasure to deal with us, he only uses his own right; that we have our existence for no other end but to contribute to his pleasure and do his will, whatever it may cost us; that he can never be unjust or cruel or injurious to us, whatever way he treats us, but we are highly unjust and injurious to him, and counteract the very end of our creation, when we repine or murmur against him, and refuse to serve him in the way in which he desires our service. Wherefore in the midst of all our afflictions, however grievous they may be, whether in soul or body, whether of a public or private nature, whether in our goods, persons or reputation, or of whatever kind they be, the thought that he, who sends them upon us, is our sovereign lord, ought to keep down every rising of our passions, or impatience, and make us receive them all with the most profound humility and resignation. And indeed if the extrinsecal, adventitious dominion which man has over the inferior creatures, and was given him by their common creator, authorizes him to use them as he pleases, without regard to what it may cost them; how much more must the absolute, essential and independent dominion which God has over us, entitle him to do with us whatever he has a mind? and how much ought the sense of this supreme right of God to do so, to suppress all murmuring on our part, whatever trials or afflictions

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he may be pleased to send upon us? In fact, this is the effect which this consideration produced in all the holy servants of God, in the midst of their severest trials. Thus when Job was reduced in a few hours, from the greatest opulence to the most abject poverty, when he lost all his children at once by a violent death, and was himself afflicted with a most loathsome disease, "In all these things, Job sinned not by his lips, nor spoke he any foolish thing against God; but fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said; Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it has pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job i. 21. In like manner when the venerable High Priest Eli, was told by Samuel the prophet, all the evils that were to come upon his family, he heard the whole without the least emotion, and at the end he expressed himself in this most submissive manner, "It is the Lord, let him do what is good in his sight." 1 Kings (Sam.) iii. 18. David was remarkable for his profound submission to this sovereign dominion of God, in so much that when he was flying from the face of his rebel son Absalom, in great distress and affliction, and Semei came out against him, and cursed him in a most outrageous manner, and one of David's officers "said to the king, Why should this dead dog curse the king? I will go and cut off his head." David considering Semei's behaviour as a trial sent him from God, replied, "Let him alone and let him curse; the Lord hath bid him curse David, and who is he that shall say, Why hath he done so?" 2 Kings (Sam.) xvi. 9. And also upon this same occasion of his flying from Absalom, when he sent back the ark of God to the city of Jerusalem, he said, "If I shall find grace in the sight of the Lord, he will bring me again, and will shew me both it and his tabernacle. But if he shall say to me, *Thou pleasest me not*; I am ready, let him do that which is good before him." 2 Kings (Sam.)

(Sam.) xv. 25. And he tells us that this was his general conduct upon all such occasions, "Thou hast made me a reproach to the fool: I was dumb and I opened not my mouth; because thou hast done it." Psa. xxxviii. 9. And Jesus Christ himself, the king of saints, when oppressed in the garden with grief and sorrow, so as to fall into an agony and sweat of blood, cried indeed to his father, if it was possible to remove from him the cup of his passion, but immediately added with a most profound submission, "Yet not my will, but thine be done." And when afterwards St. Peter drew his sword to defend him, he expressly forbade him, would allow no resistance, and gave this only reason, "The chalice, *says he*, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Jo. xviii. 11. In a word, such was the conduct of all the saints of God, and in so doing they found a source of great consolation in all their sufferings; such also will it be to us, if by a frequent and serious meditation on the supreme dominion which almighty God has over us, and over all creatures, and the total subjection we owe to him, we endeavour on all occasions to resign ourselves to his holy will, and pay that entire submission to his sovereign authority and the dispositions of his holy providence, which he so justly deserves, and which our duty so strictly requires from us.

Q. 20. As God has such an unlimited power and authority over us, does he use it in an arbitrary and despotick manner, and treat us with harshness and severity?

A. Far from it; nothing can be more engaging than the tenderness and affection with which he exercises his dominion over us. If he lays some commands upon us, he takes care they be only such as are most just and reasonable in themselves, and always tend to our real happiness; if he requires of us to mortify our irregular passions, he does so, because he knows they are the greatest enemies of our peace, and that our indulging them would make us miserable: the service he requires from us is exceedingly moderate

moderate, is of no manner of use to himself, and cannot add the smallest mite to his happiness, but its whole tendency is to our own good, and yet he rewards it in the most ample manner, as if he had reaped some great advantage from it. He treats us not as servants but as children, assuring us that he has the bowels of a father towards us, yea that his love to us exceeds that of the tenderest mother to her darling child. He knows our weakness, and has compassion on our miseries, and treats our frailties with the greatest indulgence; even when we offend him, he pities and spares us, and is ready to receive us again with open arms, upon our repentance. See how beautifully the scripture declares this his amiable disposition towards us. "Great power always belonged to thee alone, and who shall resist the strength of thy arm? . . . but thou hast mercy upon all, because thou canst do all things, and winkest at the sins of men, for the sake of repentance. For thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which thou hast made; for thou didst not appoint or make any thing hating it . . . But thou sparest, all because they are thine, O Lord, who lovest souls." Eccl. xi. 22. "For so much then as thou art just, thou orderest all things justly, thinking it not agreeable to thy power to condemn him who deserveth not to be punished. For thy power is the beginning of justice, and *because thou art Lord of all, thou makest thyself gracious to all . . . for thou being master of power, judgest with tranquility, and with great favour disposest of us.*" Eccl. xii. 15. Oh! what sentiments of gratitude and love ought this to excite in our souls, towards so bountiful a master! Let us only consider seriously, and have a lively sense imprinted in our souls of *who he is*, and *who we are!* how absolute his power, and how unlimited our subjection! how infinite his dominion, and how total our dependance! what he might justly demand from us, and what he does require of us! and this cannot fail to convince us of the immense obligation we lie under to serve

and obey him to the utmost of our power, and to submit with the most profound respect and resignation to every dispensation of his providence towards us. From all which we see in the most convincing manner, how strictly we are bound to serve God, and how indispensable our duty in justice is to obey his holy commandments.

Q. 21. Whence arises our duty in gratitude to obey God?

A. From his infinite love towards us, and the wonderful effects of this love, in the benefits he has, and daily does bestow upon us.



C H A P. III.

Of the ineffable Goodness and Love of God towards Man, and our Duty in Gratitude to keep his Commandments.

Q. 1. **W**HAT things are chiefly to be considered in explaining the goodness and love of God to man?

A. They are all comprehended by St Paul under four heads; to wit, The length, the breadth, the height, and depth of his love; and the apostle earnestly prays for his beloved Ephesians, that they may have a full sense and comprehension of the infinite goodness of God in all these its four dimensions. "I bow my knees, says he, to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that . . . being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and height and depth; to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God." Ephes. iii. 14. 17. In which words he also declares, that this holy know-
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ledge of the love of God and of Christ, is the powerful means to fill us with *all the fulness of God*, that is, to implant in our souls all heavenly virtues and graces, by which God dwells in our souls, and satiates all our powers and faculties with the sweets of his divine presence; and consequently is a most efficacious motive to excite and enable us to keep all his holy commandments.

§ 1. *Of the Length of the Love of God.*

Q. 2. What is meant by the *length of the love of God*?

A. By this is meant its *eternal duration*. Great honour would it be for us, had almighty God loved us only from the first moment of our existence, when we first were formed in our mother's womb; but his love for us was long before we had a being; and what he said to his prophet Jeremiah, is, in regard to his love for us, equally true of every one of us, "Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee." Jer. i. 5. Still more honourable for us would his love have been, had it only begun with the creation of the world, but it was prior to that also; even before the world began, we were present in the mind of God; before he created the heavens or the earth, he knew us, and we were the objects of his love; so that each of us may say with truth, what the divine wisdom says of itself, "The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived . . . the mountains with their huge bulk had not yet been established; before the hills I was brought forth." Prov. viii. 24. to wit, I was *conceived* in the knowledge of the almighty, and *brought forth* in the resolution which his love for me had taken to bring me in due time into being; even then he had appointed to heap his benefits upon me, and chose me to be a member of his holy church, and to sanctify me by the blood of his son Jesus; "He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted

in his sight in charity." Ephes. i. 4. But how long before the foundation of the world did God know and love us? Oh! here no term can be assigned; the knowledge and love of God are as essential as himself; what he knows and loves in time, he knew and loved from all eternity. From all eternity **we** were present in the mind of God; from all eternity he loved us; from all eternity he decreed to bring us into being in time; to draw us out of nothing, in which we then were, and to bestow upon us all those admirable effects of his love, compassion, and goodness for us, which, since the first moment of our existence, we have actually received. "I have loved thee, *says he himself*, with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee." Jer. xxx. 3. Oh what an amazing idea does it give us of the love of God, to reflect that so great a being, perfectly happy in himself, and who had not the smallest need of us, should from all eternity have been employed in thinking upon, and loving such poor ungrateful creatures as we are! What return can we make for such eternal goodness? How just, how incumbent must it be on us always to employ our thoughts on so loving an object, and make it our continual study to love and serve him, and to obey his holy commands?

§ 2. Of the Breadth of divine Love.

Q. 3. What is meant by the *breadth of the love of God* for us?

A. By this is meant the *extension of his benevolence towards us*, which embraces all that immensity of benefits and favours, which his love for us makes him daily bestow upon us here; and that still greater store of good things which he has prepared for us hereafter. For to love, is, properly speaking, to wish well to the beloved object, and to do him good; and as, *the doing good* is the natural effect, and the most convincing proof of the *sincerity of our love*,

So the more excellent the good is, which we do, and the more numerous the benefits which we confer, the more it shows the greatness of our love to the object of it. In this view then, the benevolence or good will of God to man, is no less infinite in its breadth or extension, than eternal in its duration; for it embraces all possible good things, both in the order of nature, and in the order of grace, and in the order of glory, both for soul and body, for time and for eternity; vast numbers of which he actually does bestow upon all mankind; and all others he wills and desires to give us, and undoubtedly would do so, did not we ourselves, by the perversity of our hearts, put a hindrance to the designs of his mercy towards us.

Q. 4. What is understood by the *goods in the order of nature*?

A. All those benefits of God which we enjoy as human creatures, and which are common to all mankind in general. Now concerning these, the following particulars are chiefly to be considered. *First; our very being itself*, which is wholly the gift of God; for as to the share our parents had in bringing us to existence, it is so trifling when compared to what is done by God, that it does not even deserve to be named; they neither created the soul, which is our most excellent part, nor did they form any member or portion of the body; no, not even a hair or a nail, nor did they so much as know, whether we were to come to light or not, or what kind of a being we were to be: This the holy mother of the seven Maccabees was very sensible of, when, exhorting her sons to suffer martyrdom, she put them in mind that they owed their whole being to God alone who created it; and if they lost it for his sake, he would restore it to them again; but as for me, said she, "I know not how you were formed in my womb; for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, nor did I frame the limbs of every one of you. But the Creator of the world formed the nativity of man." 2 Macch. vii. 22. Now this benefit of our existence

existence is a favour of the highest value, far exceeding any other natural good that we can enjoy; it is indeed the foundation of all other goods whatsoever, since without it, we could enjoy no other: hence our Saviour says, "Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?" Mat. vi. 25. and do we not cheerfully part with every thing else we possess, to preserve our life when it is in danger? yea, to preserve or recover any of our senses or faculties which are necessary for the integrity of our *being*? Now if we are so much indebted to our parents for the part they contributed to this so great a benefit, tho' it was but little, and tho' they were only as mere instruments in the hand of God, that we can never repay them to the full of what we owe them on that account, what must our obligation be to the almighty, to whom we owe the whole of what we are, who created our soul out of nothing, who with the most exquisite wisdom and art formed all our members in our mother's womb, gave us all our senses, powers, and faculties, an understanding to know him and a heart to love him, our memory, our power of speech, and in short every thing we are or have? What return of gratitude can we make to him, that can bear the smallest proportion to what we owe him? How indispensable then must our duty be, to make him at least all the return we can, by loving him, serving him, and obeying his holy commandments? But to shew the greatness of this benefit in its proper light, the following considerations are not to be passed over.

The first is, that in bestowing this favour upon us, almighty God, out of his pure goodness and predilection for us, gave us the preference to an infinite number of others, whom he could have produced to being instead of us, but who never were, and never will be, brought to light. The infinite wisdom of the creator saw from all eternity in the most distinct order, all that innumerable multitude of human creatures, which it was possible for his almighty power to create; and being resolved, according to the views

of his incomprehensible providence, to give existence only to a determinate number, he was pleased to make choice of us to be of that happy number, leaving all the rest in an eternal *nothing*! How highly favoured are we by this election! What singular privilege is here shown to us! The question was of bestowing one of the greatest of favours; the number of those who were capable of receiving it was infinite; none of them had the smallest merit which could entitle them to a preference; all were upon a perfect equality; all were equally nothing: Why then exclude such infinite numbers, and favour us? Why give us the preference to them, who were all equally deserving? No other answer can be given to this question, but, because it was the good will and pleasure of God to do so; it was the sole effect of his love for us, to prefer us to so many thousands. But how greatly does this predilection on the part of God increaseth our obligation to him? What an immense favour was it done to Noah and his family to save them from the common destruction in which all the rest of mankind was involved? How great was the predilection shown to Lot, in delivering him alone from the dreadful perdition to which all his fellow citizens in Sodom were condemned? How great then the love shown to us by almighty God, in bringing us to *being*, preferable to so many others, and extricating us from that eternal nothing in which millions of possible creatures must remain for ever? Especially when we reflect that Noah and Lot were good men, friends and servants of God, untainted by the crimes, which brought such a judgment on the others; but we had no kind of merit, no claim, no title on our part, which could in the smallest degree move God to give us the preference.

The second consideration on this matter is this; that instead of having any merit on our part to move God to prefer us to others, and bring us into *being*, there were the strongest reasons against it; to wit, the numberless crimes and injuries, which we have com-

committed against him since we had our *being*; the abuse of that free will with which he has adorned us, and which is the highest ornament of our nature; and our unparalleled ingratitude in making use of our very members, powers, and faculties, and of the numberless benefits he has bestowed upon us, as so many arms by which to affront and offend him. All this he foresaw distinctly before he created us, yea he saw it from all eternity, for "The works of all flesh are before him, and there is nothing hid from his eyes; he sees from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before him." Eccclus. xxix. 24. Yet nothing of this was able to hinder the effects of his predilection for us. "I see, said he, the injuries such an one will do me if I create him: I see the abuse he will make of all his faculties both of soul and body to my dishonour; nevertheless let my goodness triumph over his ingratitude. I will create him preferable to others, though I know that many of these others would be more faithful and grateful to me." Here we see a prodigy of love indeed beyond all example, and which, if we have any feeling in our heart at all, cannot fail to melt it down in affections of the most sensible gratitude towards so merciful and bounteous a father.

Add to all this, in the third place, that he not only gave us our *being* for once, when he first made us, but he continues to renew the same gift every moment of our existence by his continual conservation, without which we should, if left to ourselves, in an instant return to our original nothing; and tho' our daily sin against him justly deserve that he should abandon us and reduce us again to non-existence, yet his infinite goodness still bears with our infidelity, and keeps us in being, to give us time and place for repentance.

Lastly, he not only preserves us in *being*, but he continues also to preserve all our senses, powers and faculties, and to cooperate with us in every, even the smallest, use we make of any of them; for as without his conservation we could not subsist one moment in being; so without his continual co-operation we could

not move hand nor foot nor tongue, nor use any one of those faculties he has given us ; for “ It is he who giveth to all, life and breath and all things,” and it is in him we live and move and have our being.” Acts ii. 25. 28. And therefore the prophet Isaiah says to him, “ Lord, thou hast wrought all our works for us.” Is. xxvi. 12. What stupenduous goodness is here again displayed ! What a total dependance have we upon our God ! What a faithful and assiduous assistance does he give us ! But what return of gratitude do we owe to him for this !

If now, in the *second place*, we leave this little world of our own *being*, and take a view of the great world around us, what amazing effects of the infinite goodness of God towards us, do every where present themselves before us ! wherever we turn our eyes we find the footsteps of his love, every creature we perceive about us is a proof of his good will to us ; every one of them co-operates to our service, to supply our wants, to relieve our necessity, or to afford us some convenience or comfort ; and every one of course displays the beneficent hand of God in having created them for that purpose. The heavenly bodies, in their unceasing circuit, enlighten our earthly habitation, and were created “ to shine in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night ; for signs and for seasons and for days and for years.” Gen. i. 14. Who can enumerate the numberless benefits we reap from the fire, the water and the air ? What innumerable services do we receive from the earth, both in the vast variety of plants, and herbs and fruits and trees which it produces on its surface, and the manifold treasures of useful minerals it contains in its bowels ? What shall we say of the living creatures about us, which afford us food and raiment in such variety and abundance, and labour and toil in any way we please both for our service and pleasure ? All these things the goodness of God created for the use and service of man ; whom “ he set over the works of his hands ; he subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen ; moreover

moreover the beasts also of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea that pass through the paths of the sea." Pl. viii. 6. that all might contribute to his happiness, and convince him of the unbounded extent of the divine goodness towards him. Let us open our eyes and look around us, and see if there be any one thing we have occasion for, but what he has provided for us. What delicacy of love has not our good God shown us even in the minutest things? What gratitude and love ought we not then to return to him for such unmerited goodness!

Not only does his love to us appear in the manifold benefits he heaps upon us by means of the inferior creation, but still more resplendently in the numberless favours which, by the disposition of his providence, our fellow creatures, men, are made the instruments in his hands of procuring for us. What shall we say of the care and attention paid to our wellbeing by our parents in our infant state, when we cannot move a finger to help ourselves? What shall we say of the benefits of society, in which kings and princes, magistrates and rulers are employed by his divine providence to protect and defend the meanest amongst us, to secure our property and defend us from injuries? What shall we say of that strict command he lays upon all, to *love their neighbour as themselves*, and the powerful motive he brings to enforce it, assuring us that *what we do to the least of our brethren he esteems as done to himself*? But what is still more surprising, he has made such a connection among mankind, by the amiable disposition of his providence, as to lay us under a necessity of helping and serving one another, in so much that it is impossible for us to promote our own welfare without at the same time contributing to that of others, even of those we never saw, yea even of those that are yet unborn. It is a most delightful consideration to reflect on this, and to see what multitudes of men the goodness of God makes use of to serve us. Take one instance, in the morsel of bread we eat for our daily aliment. How many of our fellow creatures have been employed to prepare that for our use? How many in labouring

the ground where it grow; in sowing the seed; in reaping the corn; in threshing it out in the barn; in grinding it at the mill; in bringing it to market; in baking it to bread? How many artists have been employed in preparing the necessary instruments for each of these to perform their respective parts, in such a multiplicity of labours, carpenters, smiths, masons, and others such? Nor is this all; the seed itself, from whence the bread is produced, could not have been sown, if it had not been provided by the labour and industry of others, and that in a continued succession of husbandmen, and of all the various artists necessary for their work, from the very beginning of the world. What an amazing idea does this give us of the wonderful providence of God, and of his goodness towards us, in employing such multitudes of our brethren, who knew nothing about us, who existed ages before we were in being, in preparing that morsel of bread which we eat for our daily food; and in putting them under such unavoidable necessity of not being able to serve themselves, without at the same time helping us? The same reflection is equally to be made in regard to every good thing we enjoy; in all the different kinds of meat and drink and cloathing, in the various arts and sciences, in the studies of the learned, in the good books they publish, and in every thing else that any one does for the good and benefit of mankind. What infinite obligations then do we not lie under to our great creator, whose amiable providence has so beneficently disposed all things for our good? Truly "The Lord is sweet to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works!"
Psa. cxliv. 9.

Great indeed and admirable are all these effects of the divine goodness; but it does not stop here; he not only has ordained all the visible creatures about us, for our service, but he even employs his heavenly spirits, those beings of such superior excellency to us, to be our guardians and attendants; to guide and direct us, to guard us from our enemies, and to de-

send us from many dangers ; “ There shall no evil come unto thee, *says the royal prophet*, nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling ; for he hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways ; in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Ps. xc. 10. And “ are they not all ministering spirits, *says St. Paul*, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation !” Heb. i. 14. What an exalted idea does this give us of the boundless love of God towards us, when we consider, *who we are ; who are sent to guard us ; who he is that sends them, and for what end !* Oh ! how greatly are we honoured by such goodness ! how great is our obligation then to correspond with it, by a faithful obedience to his holy commandments !

Such then are the general effects of the divine goodness towards all mankind ; for “ he makes his sun to rise on the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust.” Matt. v. 45. It is true, in the distribution of these common benefits, he divides many of them in different degrees, giving to some more, and to others less ; but even this he does for the most beneficent purposes, according as he sees to be most proper for the real good of the receivers. And this very unequal division of many of these benefits, gives each of us another just occasion to see the particular goodness of God towards himself, by considering how liberal he has been to us, above what he is to many others. How many do we find of our brethren, who are of the same mould and nature with ourselves, deprived of many of those good things which we enjoy, and subjected to many sufferings, of which we are free ? some are confined to their beds with lingering and painful distempers ; some deprived of the integrity or use of some of their members ; many lame, blind, deaf, palsied, half men ! many reduced to extreme penury, without a house to receive them, or cloaths to cover them, and forced to seek their bread from the charity of others. Let us cast our

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eyes on all such, and ask ourselves this question, Why are these so miserable, and I so happy? Why so many good things to me, and so few to them? Perhaps my sins deserve much worse than theirs, and yet God treats me with such lenity and mercy! What an ample field does this afford us, to admire and adore the infinite goodness of God to us, and to excite in our hearts the most sensible affections of gratitude and love to him!

And we must not imagine, that because these common effects of the divine goodness were made for all mankind in general, therefore God has not any special regard for each of us in particular; his holy word assures us that, "he made the great and the small, and hath *equally* care of all." Wis. vi. 8. that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father, or is forgotten before God." Yea, that "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." Matt. x. Luke xxi. The goodness of God extends to each one in particular, no less than to all in general; and when he gave being to all the other creatures for the use of man, he had each individual before his eyes, in regard to the proportion of these benefits he intended for him, as distinctly as he had the whole; so that each one of us in particular can say with the greatest truth, what the divine wisdom says of itself in another sense, "When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when with a certain law and compass he prepared the depths, when he established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters; when he compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits, when he balanced the foundations of the earth, *I was with him.*" Prov. viii. 27. Though I had not then received existence, yet I was distinctly present to his infinite knowledge, as the end of that great work, and for whose use and service he created it! And on the same ground it is that, though Christ died for all men universally, yet St. Paul applies his death no less entirely to himself than if he

had died for him alone. "I live in the faith of the Son of God, *says he*, who loved *me*, and delivered himself *for me*." Gal. ii. 20. How endearing a consideration is this ! and what an affecting motive does it afford, to excite us still more and more to love and serve that good and gracious God, who shows such special love and kindness to each of us in particular ! Such then is the extension or breadth of the love of God to man, considered only in regard to those good things which are in the order of nature. But what an incredible addition does it receive, when to these are also joined the far more excellent goods which are in the order of grace and of glory ! But as it is in them that we see the sublimity or height of the love of God, we shall particularly consider them under that view.

§ 3. Of the Height of the Love of God.

Q. 5. What is meant by the *height of the love of God* ?

A. By this is understood, the inconceivable excellency and sublimity of those supernatural effects of his love, which he bestows upon us in this world by his grace, and has prepared for us in the world to come in his eternal glory ; which are so far superior in value and dignity to all those goods which he bestows on us in the order of nature, that they will not admit of a comparison with them ; and have this further advantage also over them, that whereas Almighty God in giving us all kind of natural goods, gives us only the use of them, reserving to himself the full power of taking them from us again when he pleases, he has on the contrary bound himself by his sacred promise, that when once he bestows his supernatural goods on a soul, he will never deprive her of them again in this world, unless by her own fault in the abuse of her free will, she forfeits them and throws them from her ; and in the world to come, when in possession of his eternal glory, he will put her under
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the happy impossibility of ever having it in her power to forfeit it.

Q. 6. Wherein does the sublimity of these supernatural goods consist?

A. It consists in this; that by communicating his divine grace to our souls, he gives us a new manner of existence, a supernatural being, a spiritual dignity, by which we are exalted from the low condition of our native dust, and servile state, to the sublime and eminent dignity of being really and truly the intimate friends of God, yea, of being his adopted children; partaking in a most admirable manner of his divine nature, and united to him by the strictest ties of union. St. Peter, speaking of this effect of divine grace, says, "He has given us great and precious promises, that by these you may be *made partakers of the divine nature.*" 2 Pet. i. 4. And the wise man says of it, that "it is a vapour of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty, and therefore no defiled thing can come near it; that it is the brightness of eternal light . . . and conveyeth itself into holy souls, and *maketh friends of God.*" Wisd. vii. 25. Hence our blessed Saviour says, "I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of my father, I have made known to you." Jo. xv. 15. Here he not only shows the dignity of being his friends, to which he raises us; but also the intimate manner in which he treats us as his friends, by communicating his heavenly truths to us. But the effects of his love do not stop here; by this participation of himself, which his grace communicates to our souls, he exalts us to that inconceivable dignity of being his adopted children. "Behold, *says the beloved disciple*, what manner of charity the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be *the sons of God.*" 1 Jo. iii. 1. Now what human understanding can frame any idea of this most exalted dignity, that we who are by nature *dust and*
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ashes, and of ourselves *nothing and vanity*, should be so highly honoured as to be not only allowed, but even entitled to address ourselves to the great, eternal, incomprehensible Being, before whom the *pillars of heaven tremble*, with the confidence and affection of children? "for you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father.*" Rom. viii. 15.

Now this dignity of being sons of God, is not an empty title of honour, which brings no solid advantage to our souls, but it is a dignity which carries along with it a full and perfect right to the greatest of all good, to the only real good, the possession of God himself, and of his eternal glory in his kingdom; "We are the sons of God, *says St. Paul*, and if sons, heirs also; *heirs indeed of God*, and joint heirs with Christ." Rom. viii. 17. Heirs of that eternal kingdom in which *God himself is our reward exceeding great!* Heirs of that happiness which so far exceeds every thing in this world, that it cannot enter into the heart of man to form any conception of it! a happiness, the possession of which can never be taken from us, and which will never cloy! a kingdom that will never end! where "we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord." 1 Cor. iii. 18. and where "we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is." 1 Jo. iii. 2. So that what David says shall then justly be applied to us, "I have said, *You are gods*, and all of you the sons of the most high." Psa. lxxxi. 6. But what human mind, yea what angelical understanding is capable to form any adequate idea of such an extraordinary favour, such excessive liberality, such singular magnificence, such sublime benefits, as the infinite love of God has here bestowed upon us? It has gone so far, that his omnipotence itself can go no further; for what can God Almighty give better or more excellent than himself? But what return of gratitude

gratitude and love are not we bound to make for such unparalleled goodness? Is there any obedience we can give him, which can bear the smallest proportion to what we owe him? and shall we refuse that little which we can do? What shocking ingratitude would that be!

But though the infinite goodness of God has prepared these most sublime goods for all mankind, and wills and desires that all should partake of them, for "God will have all men to be saved," 1 Tim. ii. 4. yet it is no less true that, through the unsearchable judgments of the Almighty, which are always just and righteous, all mankind are not brought to the actual participation of them; "but he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." Rom. ix. 15. Hence there opens to our consideration another most affecting view of the infinite love of God to us christians, to whom he has showed so unspeakable a mercy, by calling us to the knowledge and love of his son Jesus, by making us members of his holy church, and by giving us, in her holy communion, so many and such powerful graces and helps to enable us to secure to ourselves the eternal inheritance of his glory; while thousands and thousands of others upon the face of the earth, of the same nature with ourselves, are left in ignorance and error, wandering about like sheep without a pastor, in the paths that lead to destruction. Oh here indeed we are lost in wonder, and confounded! Whence so singular a predilection for us? whence so privileged a vocation? Whence that eternal love, by which "he hath chosen us in Christ, *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity? and by which he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, through Jesus Christ, unto himself?" Ephes. i. 4. Whence that infinite goodness, which "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us to the kingdom of his beloved son?" Col. i. 10. Which has made us "fellow citizens with the saints and domesticks of God, built upon the foundation of the

the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner stone?" Ephes. ii. 18. Whence that amazing bounty, that we should be to God, "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, that we may declare the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness to his admirable light?" 1 Pet. ii. 9. Was there any thing in us that could move God to shew us such a distinguished mercy? No, no. "He hath called us by his holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, *before the times of the world.*" 2 Tim. i. 9. "Not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us . . . that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs, according to hope, of life everlasting." Tit. iii. 7. Oh how inexhaustible a fund have we here of pious meditation, to show us the unspeakable love of God towards us christians, and to excite in our souls the most feeling affections of love, gratitude, and praise to our gracious benefactor! What must have been our doom, had we not been called to the true faith of Christ? How undeserving are we of such a mercy? How ungrateful have we hitherto been for it? How many thousands, of those who are deprived of it, would have made a better use of such a favour than we have done? Why then has the almighty bestowed that mercy upon us, and refused it to them? What then do we owe to him for such a distinguished favour? Do or suffer what we can for his sake, will it ever bear any proportion with what we owe him? How great then is our duty to serve him! How immense our obligation to keep his holy commands, and do all we can to please him!

§ 4. *Of the Depth of the Love of God.*

Q. 7. What is meant by the *depth of the love of God?*

A. Love, when sincere and disinterested, is a most

surprising affection; once it gets entire possession of the heart, it sticks at nothing to accomplish its end; it is bent on doing good to its object, it thinks no treasures too great to be bestowed upon it; no sufferings too severe, no humiliation too mortifying to be undergone for its sake. In the sublime excellency of the treasures bestowed on man by almighty God, we have seen the amazing height of his love for us; we have seen the *greatness of his sufferings*, and the *unheard-of humiliations* to which his ardent love for us has reduced him, in order to secure those treasures for us, we see the stupendous depth of divine charity. To have a clear and affecting sense of this dimension of the love of God to us, the following truths must be seriously pondered.

(1.) Even the strongest love among men, when it is despised and disregarded, and especially when repaid with injuries, is apt at last to be changed into the most violent hatred; yea, its very greatness and fervour, it increases the malignity of the evil return it meets with, so it affords the stronger incentives to resentment and revenge. Now where shall we find a love equal or comparable in any respect, to the love of God for man? Or where shall we find a love, which has been so unworthily treated, so ill repaid, and so nominiously abused, as his divine love for man has been? Notwithstanding the numberless favours with which his infinite goodness condescends to caress us, in order to excite a grateful correspondence on our side, we, unhappy we! regardless of his infinite majesty, unmoved by his innumerable benefits, in contempt of the eternal happiness of his kingdom, in order to gratify some vile passion, or obtain some trifling interest, or the vain fumes of worldly applause, think nothing of turning our back upon our eternal Saviour, renouncing the sublime dignity of being his children, despising his friendship, and affronting him in the most outrageous manner, by preferring the vilest creatures, even the devil himself, before him! For what else do we do, every time we commit a mortal

mortal sin against him? And what has been the general conduct of mankind, since the unhappy fall of Adam to this day, but to treat the God of majesty in this unworthy manner? And this ungrateful behaviour is what he frequently complains of in the most moving terms. "Hear, O ye heavens, *says he*, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have brought up children, and have exalted them, but they have despised me!" Is. i. 2. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates thereof, be very desolate, saith the Lord; for my people have done two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer. ii. 12. "What is there that I ought to do for my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought wild grapes?" Is. v. 4. Now what might not justly be expected from such shocking ingratitude! Could we wonder if the almighty should put on all the terrors of his justice, to avenge the cause of his so much injured love? Did he not do so to the rebel angels, creatures of a much more excellent nature than man? Did he not, for their very first offence, disinheret them that instant, divest them of all his graces, and by an irrevocable sentence, "deliver them to infernal ropes, drawn down to the lower hell, into torments?" 2 Pet. ii. 4. Why has he not treated us in the same manner? Only the excess of his love for us can answer this question. Great indeed must this excess be, since the excess of our ingratitude does not extinguish it! O how truly does his holy word declare this! "Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it." Cant. viii. 7. No; all that deluge of wickedness, with which he is daily affronted by man, is not able to put a stop to the effects of his goodness towards us; he still continues to heap favours upon us, he bears with the most inconceivable patience the innumerable outrages we daily do against him,
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(2.) Great indeed must that love be, which such ingratitude on our part is not able to destroy; but all this is little to what it has further done; even from our very ingratitude itself, it redoubles its strength, and from what ought in all reason to extinguish it, it takes occasion beyond measure to increase its ardours; so that, "where sin abounded, grace hath abounded more." Rom. v. 20. Our good God, not content with so patiently suffering the numberless sins we daily commit against him, and restraining during the whole course of our mortal life the punishment we so justly deserve, he has even gone further, and fallen upon a most effectual means to free us from that eternal misery to which we must otherwise have been condemned at last by his infinite justice. But what means, great God! how stupendous! how unheard of! and how much above what could ever have entered into the heart of man to imagine! His unbounded love, well knowing that every offence committed against him, from the infinite malice it contains, requires in strict justice a satisfaction of infinite value, and seeing that neither man himself, nor any other pure creature was able to pay this debt for us; he himself, O unheard of goodness! O unbounded love! he himself, our offended God, takes upon himself to pay this debt for us, his ungrateful offenders! and for this purpose, "he debases himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and in fashion found as a man;" and in this his *human nature*, "he humbles himself, becoming obedient to death, even *the painful, ignominious, disgraceful* death of the cross." Phil. ii. 7. And there, with the last drop of his precious blood, discharges the heavy debt of eternal punishment, which we his ungrateful, outrageous enemies owed for our sins to the divine justice! Oh stupendous effects of divine love! which nothing but infinite wisdom could invent, infinite goodness make choice of, and infinite
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power execute! Oh excess of charity! so much superior to the utmost reach of the human understanding, that without the supernatural light of divine faith, it must appear as fables, dreams, or incredible chimeras! and is indeed, "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles, foolishness." 1 Cor. i. 23.

(3.) But who are we for whom the almighty God shows such amazing love? Alas! "All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity." Is. xl. 13. David is astonished that God should so much as remember us. "What is man, *says he*, that thou art mindful of him?" Ps. viii. 5. and in another place, "Lord, what is man, that thou art made known to him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him? man is like to vanity; his days pass away like a shadow." Ps. cxliii. 3. Job is no less surprised at so great a wonder, "What is man, *says he*, that thou shouldest magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?" Job vii. 17. "He cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state. And dost thou think it meet to open thy eyes on such an one?" Job xiv. 2. And yet this God of infinite majesty, who has no need of man, who is perfectly happy in himself without man, not only is mindful of him, yea, has him always in his remembrance; not only makes account of him, and magnifies him, not only opens his eyes upon him, but sets his heart and love upon him to such a degree, as to open all the veins of his sacred humanity, and shed the last drop of his precious blood to save him!

(4) Could it ever have entered into the heart of man to have asked this of God? who would ever have been so audacious as to have said to him, "O great God, your justice pursues me for my sins, I cannot escape it; I therefore beseech you to come down from heaven and make yourself a man, that you may die upon a cross to save me from the punishment I so justly deserve." Ridiculous, without doubt, insolent
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and rash to the highest degree, would every one esteem him, who ever should have made such a prayer, not only to God, a being of infinite greatness, but even to any earthly prince, yea to any friend or brother, though he had never in the smallest degree offended him. And yet this very thing, which it could never have entered into the heart of any one to ask of him, the sovereign of the whole universe has done of his own accord for the very rebel slave that was a traitor to him!

(5) To lay down our life for another, be he friend or equal or superior, is the highest pitch to which our love can go; "for greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend." Jo. xv. 13. and hence, though we are the creatures of God, infinitely obliged to serve him, and made only for his pleasure, yet we think we love him to the highest degree if we offer ourselves to die for him; how excessive then must his love for us be, who has done that for us his slaves and enemies, than which we could not do more for our dearest friend, for the most loving father, for God himself?

(6) "Why did Christ, says *S. Paul*, when as yet we were weak, according to the time, die for the ungodly? for scarce for a just man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man some one would venture to die; but God commendeth his charity towards us, because, when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us." Rom. v. 6. and died for us on purpose by his cruel and ignominious death to obtain for us remission of those very sins which we had committed against himself, and by which we have so often outraged and insulted his divine majesty.

(7) What shall we say of that endearing solicitude, anxiety and concern, which our good Lord shews so continually, lest by our negligence and folly we should lose these invaluable benefits which by his death he procured for us? his infinite love is not satisfied with having done and suffered so much to obtain them; he is no less solicitous that we should accept
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them and profit by them, than if his own happiness depended on our doing so. How many warm invitations does he make to us throughout his holy scriptures, to return to him and accept the offers of his mercy? how many affecting lamentations at our obstinacy in refusing? how many reproaches? how many threats? how many invitations? how many promises, to induce us to return from our sins to his friendship? "Turn ye, turn ye, *says he*, from your evil ways, and why will ye die, O house of Israel? Ezek. 33. 2. how many preachers of his holy word does he send to sinners? how many spiritual guides and directors, as his ambassadors and ministers, to treat with them on the great business of their reconciliation with him, as if he had been the offender, and they the offended? "He hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, *says St. Paul*, we are therefore ambassadors for Christ, God as it were exhorting by us. For Christ we beseech you, be reconciled to God." 2. Cor. v. 18. 20. With what assiduity does he himself stand at the door of our heart, intreating us, by his holy inspirations, to open the door and make up our peace with him, promising the most endearing favours if we do so?" Behold, *says he*, I stand at the door and knock, if any man shall open to me the door, I will come in to him, and *will sup with him and he with me*; to him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me on my throne, as I also have overcome, and am set down with my father on his throne." Rev. iii. 20. "O how good and sweet is thy spirit, O Lord, in all things! therefore thou admonishest them that err, and speakest to them concerning the things wherein they offend, that leaving their wickedness, they may believe in thee, O Lord." Wild. xii. 1. yea though they be obstinate in their wickedness, and deaf to his calls, though they reject them, and despise them, and even ridicule them; yet he does not for all that entirely abandon them; but as long as life remains he continues from time to time to invite them, to intreat them, and even *waiteth that he may have mercy on them*, Is. xxx. 18. forgetful in a manner of his own majesty, he follows after them with

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with an unspeakable humility and patience waiting the proper season for their conversion. But what an amazing goodness is this in him? He is the master, we the slaves; he the offended, we the offenders; he the judge, we the criminals; he stands in no need of us, but we stand extremely in need of him; and yet he humbles himself in such an extraordinary a manner to make us of slaves his friends, and we refuse it! to give us pardon of our sins, and we reject his offers! to free us from the guilt of our crimes, and we choose rather to remain sullied with their defilements! But if at last the sinner yields to such endearing importunity, and turns his heart to the Lord his God by a sincere repentance, who can conceive the joy, the exultation, the fondness with which his divine goodness receives him? Witness his behaviour to S. Mary Magdalen, Zaccheus the publican, and many others, and the parables he makes use of for this purpose of the lost sheep and prodigal son. S. Paul considering the inscrutable judgments of God and his wondrous providence, cries out with astonishment, "Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! how incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways?" Rom. xi. 33. But how great reason have we to cry out with equal astonishment, O the depth of the goodness and love of God to man! How incomprehensible are the extreme humiliations to which it has reduced him? how inconceivable the endearing abasements to which he condescends for our sake?

(8.) Finally, who is this God who shows such amazing love for us? Oh this indeed is a consideration the most wonderful of all. For he is a being of *infinite* majesty, of *infinite* perfection, of *infinite* greatness; immense, incomprehensible, omnipotent; absolutely independent on any other, and on whom every thing else essentially depends: possessing in himself the plenitude of all possible happiness, which is so immense that nothing can possibly be added to it, and so entirely his own, that the smallest iota can never be

taken from it; he is the origin and source of all being, the king of kings and lord of lords; so perfectly abounding in all good, that the most assiduous services of all mankind could not add one grain to his essential happiness, nor all the blasphemies of hell give him the smallest concern or affliction; a being in short of such excellency, that the whole creation in comparison with him, is a mere nothing! And yet this great God condescends to love this nothing with such amazing goodness!" Behold, *says Moses, all astonished at this thought*, heaven is the Lord thy God's, and the heaven of heaven, the earth and all things that are therein; and yet the Lord has been closely joined to thy fathers, and loved them." Deut. x. 14. O wonder of wonders indeed! that so great, so sublime a being should deign to think of us miserable sinners; but how much greater wonder is it that he should love us in such an amazing manner! if a man like ourselves had shown us so great love as to die for us, it would have been considered as a most extraordinary and surprising instance of love; how much is it above all astonishment, that the king of heaven should do so? But what return shall we make to him for such inconceivable goodness? Tobias the son reflecting on the favours he had received from the angel Raphael, whom he believed only to be a man like himself, by name *Azarias*, thought himself so highly indebted to him, that he said, "Brother Azarias, if I should give myself to be thy servant, I should not make a worthy return for thy care." Tob. ix. i. But afterwards when Raphael discovered himself to be an angel both to the father and son, their astonishment rose to such a pitch in reflecting that so sublime a being should have shown them so much love and kindness, that "they were troubled, and being seized with fear they fell upon the ground with their face . . . and there being prostrate for three hours they blessed God." Tob. xii. 16. 22. What ought then to be the feelings of our heart, who have received favours infinitely more valuable than what Tobias received from the angel, and from a personage

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Chap III. *Love of God to Man.* 103

personage of a dignity infinitely superior to all the angels of heaven together? Oh how powerful a motive ought this to be, to engage us for ever in the love and service of our good God, and excite us to bless and praise his holy name continually; frequently repeating with the royal prophet, and from a heart filled with gratitude and love, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he hath done for thee; who forgiveth all thy iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion; who satisfieth thy desire with good things." Ps. cii. 1. "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee, thou art my God, and I will exalt thee. I will praise thee because thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." Ps. cxvii. 28. "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify thy name for ever. For thy mercy is great towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower hell." Ps. lxxxv. 12. Wherefore "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God, while I have my being. Let my speech be acceptable to him, but I will take delight in the Lord." Ps. ciii. 33. and will show the sincerity of my heart by a constant observance of his holy commandments, for, "with my whole heart I sought after thee; O Lord, let me not stray from thy commandments. Thy words have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against thee. I have been delighted in the ways of thy testimonies, as in all riches. I will meditate on thy commandments: and I will consider thy ways. I will think of thy justifications; I will not forget thy words." Ps. cxviii. Oh happy those who enter into the spirit of these holy sentiments, and keep the commandments of their God! Happy for time! happy for eternity! They shall receive the hundred fold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.

C H A P. IV.

*Of our Happiness in this Life, if we keep
the Commandments.*

Q. 1. IF true happiness, even in this life, can only be found in the service of God, and in keeping his commandments, whence comes it that we are naturally so averse to his service?

A. One of the things that chiefly discourage us from serving God and keeping his commandments, is the false persuasion we have that all the rewards of virtue are reserved for another world, whilst in this present life, it is accompanied with great difficulties and sufferings; and as we are naturally very much attached to present happiness, we cannot think of bereaving ourselves of those objects, in the enjoyment of which we imagine this happiness consists, or of suffering those miseries which we suppose would render us at present unhappy, even for the expectation of eternal bliss in the life to come. This however is a very unreasonable conduct; for though it were true, that the rewards of virtue were all reserved for the next life, this would by no means be a just reason to hinder us from pursuing it, when we consider on the one hand, the imperfection, insufficiency, vanity, insecurity, mutability, and short duration of all present enjoyments; and on the other hand, the perfection, excellency, dignity, stability, and eternity of that happiness and bliss, which God has prepared for us in his kingdom. But in fact, this is so far from being the case, that we can aver with all truth, that the only real happiness even in this present life, can only be found in the service of God, and in the faithful observance of his holy commandments. It is true indeed, this happiness does not appear at first sight:

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Chap. IV. *Of the Happiness, &c.* 105

the philosophy of Christ is like himself, *humble and mean* to the outward appearance, but within it is *all divine* : in the eyes of worldly-minded people, nothing is more foolish or despicable, it is *a scandal to the Jews, and a folly to the Gentiles ; but to them that are called, it is the power of God.* 1 Cor. i. 23. And it is only those that set themselves in earnest to study and practise it, who find to their happy experience the admirable felicity which it brings to its votaries : So that we may justly say of it to worldly minded people, what our Saviour says on a different occasion, *Oh that thou hadst but known in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace !* Luke xix. 14. It is therefore principally by trial that we can be convinced of this truth, as God himself assures us by his prophet ; for when his people proposed this very difficulty, and said, “ He laboureth in vain that serveth God, and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked sorrowful before the Lord of hosts ? Wherefore now we call the proud people happy, for they that work wickedness are built up, and they have tempted God, and are preserved.” To this God answers, by declaring the special care he has of the just ; and ends with these words, “ You shall return (*to wit, from your evil ways*), and shall see the difference between the just and the wicked ; and between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.” Malachi iii. 14. 18. Happy therefore are all they who set themselves in earnest to serve God ; they will soon find, to their delightful experience, how much it is their interest to do so. But altho’ it be chiefly by experience that we come to be thoroughly convinced of this, yet both the sacred scripture and reason itself, founded on the divine word, concur to assure us in the strongest manner of the certainty of this most important truth.

Q. 2. What are the direct proofs from scripture for the happiness of a virtuous life ?

A. We have the following testimonies among others. (1.) “ Oh taste and see, says the royal prophet,

phet, that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Ps. xxxiii. 8. and a little after it is added; "they that fear the Lord shall not want every good thing." v. 10. Here the royal prophet, from his own experience, exhorts all others to try, in order to be convinced of the happiness of serving God. (2.) Solomon, in his admirable book of the Ecclesiastes, after he has considered all the ways of man, and declared from his own experience the vanity and folly of all the pleasures and enjoyments of this life, draws at last this admirable conclusion from the whole, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is all man." Eccles. xii. 13. *This is all man*, says he, that is, not only all his duty, all his perfection, but also all his happiness, his only true and real felicity; for he draws this conclusion in opposition to the vanity of all earthly happiness, which he had been exposing in all the former part of his discourse. (3.) Our blessed Saviour tenderly invites us to his service, from the consideration of the happiness to be found in it, and the sweetness and easiness of it. "Come to me, *says he*, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and *I will refresh you*; take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and *you shall find rest* to your souls; for *my yoke is sweet, and my burden light*." Mat. xi. 28. Consider each word; they are full of heavenly sweetness, and more than sufficient to convince us, that our real happiness, even in this life, is only to be found in the service of that divine master who pronounces them. But his infinite goodness, not content with so solemn a declaration in general, in another place descends to more particulars, and makes this sacred promise, confirmed with his usual assueveration. "Amen I say to you, there is no man, who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel, who shall not receive a hundred times as much now in this time . . . and in the world to come, life everlasting." Mark x. 29. Here we see, that

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that the Son of God, who is truth itself, expressly distinguishes between the rewards of virtue in the next life and in this, and passes his sacred word for the one as well as for the other. Now it is impossible that his promise should be made void ; for *heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass* ; consequently those who in earnest serve God, shall not only be rewarded with eternal bliss in the next life, but even here shall receive the hundred fold, that is, the only true and solid happiness of their souls ; so that although those who have no experience of the happiness of a virtuous life cannot comprehend this, yet in reality those who sincerely serve God, are alone the truly happy.

§ 1. *True Happiness not to be found in
Worldly Enjoyments.*

Q. 3. But how can this be, seeing the adversity of the good, and the prosperity of the wicked, is so common in the world, that it is to many an occasion of scandal, and the subject of admiration and astonishment to all ?

A. To understand this, we must observe, that there are two kinds of happiness, and two kinds of misery, of which we are capable in this life ; the one is *external*, and the other *internal*. External happiness consists in the enjoyment of all those things which are agreeable to flesh and blood, a good state of health, a life of ease and abundance of the good things of this world, which gratify our sensuality, our vanity, and our curiosity ; such as riches, honours, a good name, the esteem of others, amusements, diversions, and the like ; all which give pleasure and contentment to our self love, and are pleasing to our passions and natural appetites : and this is the happiness which the world promises to its votaries. External misery, on the other hand, consists in being deprived of these things, and afflicted with their contrary

trary evils, which gives pain and distress to our self-love, and to all our natural inclinations. Internal happiness consists in the inward peace and content of the mind, fully satisfied in itself, and free from the boisterous storms of violent passions: and internal misery consists in the discontent and disturbance of the mind, dissatisfied in itself, and torn asunder with its passions. Now with regard to these two different kinds of happiness and misery, we must observe,

(1.) That they are by no means so connected together, as always to accompany one another; for a man may have great abundance of external happiness, and yet not be happy in his own mind; as on the contrary, he may be perfectly happy and content in his own mind, though deprived of external happiness. The apostles were perfectly happy in their own interior, and yet utterly deprived of all external happiness; and who had greater abundance of all the good things of the world, than Saul and Herod? and yet they were far from being happy in their own mind, from the violent passions that raged there. In like manner, a man may be in the highest degree of exterior misery, and yet be far from being miserable in his own mind, as was the case with the martyrs, and with the poor beggar mentioned by Thaulerus, and many others; as on the contrary, one may be exceedingly miserable in his own interior, even in the midst of external happiness; of which we have daily examples before our eyes in the world.

(2.) That though a man have abundance of all earthly enjoyments, even in the highest degree, yet he can never be truly happy if he has not at the same time peace and contentment in his own mind; and on the contrary, if a man be really possessed of inward happiness; if he enjoys peace of mind, and is fully satisfied in his present state, though he be deprived of all worldly enjoyments, tho' he be in poverty and sickness, tho' he be despised and calumniated, or whatever else he has to suffer, yet that man is truly happy in himself. Hence the wise man says, "Better

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is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures without content." Prov. xv. 16. The apostles were poor and mean in the world; and when thrown into prison, loaded with chains, and scourged in a most ignominious manner, yet were so happy and content in their own interior, that they rejoiced at these their sufferings!

(3.) The most ample possession of external happiness is utterly incapable of *itself* fully to satisfy the mind of man, or procure to him that internal peace and contentment in which true happiness consists. This we see from daily experience, both in ourselves and others. We often flatter ourselves with the hopes, that if we had such and such a thing, we should be content and happy; but no sooner do we get it, than we find ourselves disappointed, and as far from being satisfied as ever. Some new desire intrudes itself upon us, some new object, which we did not think of before, presents itself to our mind, in the acquisition of which we expect to find the wished-for contentment; but the moment we are in possession of it, we find ourselves no nearer that happiness we wish for, than before. We may indeed find a flattering joy, a little self-complacency and empty satisfaction on acquiring the present object of our desires, and this may continue for a little time, while the phantom of novelty lasts; but whenever this is dissolved, the soul begins to feel her former hunger, and that mighty void again appears within, which no created object is capable to fill up. "The eye is not filled with seeing, says the wise man, neither is the ear filled with hearing." Eccl. i. 8. "A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money, and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them." Eccl. v. 9. Nay, the same divine oracles assure us, that it is as impossible to satisfy the desires of man with any earthly object, as to fill hell and destruction. "Hell and destruction are never filled; so the eyes of men are never satisfied." Prov. xxvii. 20. Solomon gives us the most convincing proof of this, from his own experience; if

if ever any man could have been happy in the enjoyments of this world, he surely was the man; he had it entirely in his power to gratify every wish of his soul, and he set himself on purpose to do so, and see if it would make him happy. “I said in my heart, *says he*, I will go and abound with delights, and enjoy good things I made me great works, I built me houses and planted vineyards, I made gardens and orchards, and set them with trees of all kinds, and I made me ponds of water, to water therewith the wood of the young trees. I got me men servants and maid servants, and had a great family; and herds of oxen and great flocks of sheep, above all that were before me in Jerusalem: I heaped together for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces; I made me singing men and singing women, and *the delights of the sons of men*; cups and vessels to serve to pour out wine; and I surpassed in riches all that were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me. And *whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not, and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared*; and I esteemed this my portion, to make use of my own labour.” After such an ample enjoyment of all earthly pleasure, would we not conclude that Solomon was happy indeed? Yet it was quite the reverse; he declares in what follows, not only that his heart was not satisfied, but that he found himself rather more miserable than before. “And when I turned myself, *says he*, to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labours wherein I had *laboured in vain*, I saw in all things *vanity and vexation of mind*, and that nothing was lasting under the sun.” Eccl. ii. Observe what he says; he not only found *vanity* in all these enjoyments, that is, an incapacity of satisfying his soul, but he found them accompanied with *vexation of mind*!

It must further be observed, that this vexation of mind which accompanies even the possession of these enjoyments,

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enjoyments, is infinitely increased, so as even to render the soul completely miserable in the midst of them, if there be any one violent passion unsubdued or unsatisfied. Ahab king of Israel had all that abundance of earthly happiness which a great and powerful prince can be supposed to possess; in the midst of his enjoyments he cast his eye on a vineyard adjoining to his palace, and wanted to purchase it from Naboth the proprietor; but he, unwilling to part with the inheritance of his fathers, refused to sell it to the king. What was this poor man's vineyard to a king who had so many vineyards of his own, and possessions of all kinds in abundance? Yet all he had besides was incapable to content him while this vineyard was refused him; the want of it alone made him miserable in the midst of all his plenty; and thus the scripture describes his situation on getting the refusal, "And Ahab came to his house angry and fretting because of the word that Naboth had spoke to him, saying, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers; and casting himself on his bed he turned away his face to the wall, and would eat no bread." 3 Kings xxi. 4. How convincing a proof is this of the insufficiency of all earthly goods to satisfy the soul of man, since the want of such a trifle could make even a great king miserable? No courtier perhaps was ever more in favour with his prince, than Haman was with king Ahasuerus; this great emperor "advanced Haman, and set his throne above all the princes that were with him. And all the king's servants that were at the doors of the palace, bent their knees and worshipped Haman, for so the emperor had commanded them." Est. iii. 1. In the midst of all this grandeur, Mordecai the Jew, from a principle of religion, refused to pay him this homage of bending the knee before him as he passed by; this trifling appearance of disrespect, from a person whom Haman had every reason to despise, was such a sting to his pride, that it was sufficient alone to embitter his happiness, and rendered him, in the midst of every other thing his

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heart could desire, compleatly miserable ; the scripture thus describes his situation : “ And Haman was exceedingly angry : but dissembling his anger and returning to his house, he called together to him his friends and Zares his wife ; and he declared to them the greatness of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and with how great glory the king had advanced him above all his princes and servants ; . . . and whereas I have all these things, *said he*, I think I have nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting before the king’s gate.” Est. v. 9. Good heavens ! what an instance is this of the vanity of all earthly things, when we see such a trifle capable of embittering all their sweets, and of making one miserable in the midst of such abundance of them !

Another circumstance, which no less clearly shows the impossibility of finding true happiness in the enjoyments of the world, is this ; that whereas nobody in this life can be free from various crosses, disappointments and afflictions, no abundance of worldly enjoyments can possibly deliver their possessor from these sufferings, or support the mind in peace and tranquillity under them ; they cannot ease pain, they cannot relieve from sickness, they cannot support the soul under infamy and disgrace, and much less can they give the smallest ease when the mind itself is oppressed with dejection, melancholy or despair. “ What will you do, *says Isaiah to all such*, in the day of visitation, and of the calamity which cometh from afar ? to whom will ye fly for help ; and where will you leave your glory !” Isa. x. 3. The unhappy king Antiochus is a convincing proof of this ; after a number of victories and great conquests, by which he increased his power and glory to a great degree, at last he met with a disappointment in attacking a rich city, which he wanted to plunder, and was obliged to depart from it in great sadness ; and in this situation news was brought him of the defeat of one of his other armies by the Jews, and that they had again repaired their city and temple, which had been defaced and

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and polluted. "And it came to pass, when the king heard these words, that he was *struck with fear*, and *exceedingly moved*; and he laid himself down on his bed, and *fell sick for grief*, because it had not fallen out to him as he imagined: and he remained there many days, for great grief came more and more upon him, and he made account that he should die: and he called for his friends and said to them: *sleep is gone from my eyes, and I am fallen away, and my heart is cast down for anxiety.* And I said in my heart, *Into what tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein now I am, I that was pleasant and beloved in my power!*" 1 Macc. vi. 8. See here how one disappointment, and a piece of bad news, undermined at once the happiness he had in all his other enjoyments, nor were they able to support him under the load of grief and dejection into which he was fallen, and of which he soon after died.

And this brings us to another consideration, which still further shows how incapable all worldly enjoyments are, to give us that peace and content of heart in which alone true happiness consists: and that is the instability of all these enjoyments, and the certainty we have that in a short time we must be for ever torn from them all by death. What solid peace or content can a man enjoy in the possession of any earthly pleasure, when he reflects it may be taken from him; that he must soon be deprived of it; that he must for ever lose it, without the smallest hope of ever recovering it again? Nay, the more attachment he has to it while he possesses it, the more his torment must be at the thought of losing it. And when the hour of death approaches, who can conceive the agony of his soul? If he has passed his days in disobedience to the law of his maker, and a neglect of his salvation, as is always the case with those who seek their happiness in worldly enjoyments, what misery must his be at the hour of death, from the sight of a deceitful world that now forsakes him; from the stings of a guilty conscience which now upbraids him; from the expectation of a

dreadful judgment that now awaits him ; from the indignation of a just God whom he has provoked ; from an endless eternity that opens to his view ; and from the secret voice that tells him in the bottom of his heart, that this eternity will be to him *an eternity of woe* ? What will his riches then avail him ? what consolation can his past pleasures then afford him ? what support can all the honours of this world then yield him, to comfort his dejected soul against this load of sorrow ? and what solid happiness or content of mind can a man find in any earthly enjoyments, if he ever allows himself to think a moment on what his latter end will be ?

But (4.) Instead of finding happiness and peace of mind in these external enjoyments, we find that they are, generally speaking, destructive of internal happiness, and if we set our heart upon them, and give way to the natural bent of our mind towards them, they are the principal source of our internal misery. Who can conceive the misery, anxiety, solicitude and trouble of mind to which a man is continually exposed, who sets his heart on riches, and seeks his happiness in them ? “ All his days are full of sorrows and miseries, *says the wise man*, even in the night he doth not rest in mind ; for to the sinner God hath given vexation and superfluous care to heap up and to gather together.” Eccl. ii. 23. 26. Besides “ They that will become rich fall into temptation, and the snare of the devil, and into many *unprofitable and hurtful desires*, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For covetousness is the root of all evils, which some desiring have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows.” 1 Tim. vi. 9. How can a man be happy in such a situation, and with such dispositions ? Nay, the Holy Ghost assures us, not only, that “ The eye of the covetous man is insatiable in his portion of iniquity ;” but immediately adds, “ he will not be satisfied till he consume his own soul, drying it up.” Eccl. xiv. 9. and as for all our other irregular attachments to the enjoyments of this

this world, the same sacred truth assures us that they war against the soul, instead of giving her peace, and if yielded to, will make us a joy to our enemies.

"Dearly beloved, *says St. Peter*, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, *which war against the soul.*" 1 Pet. ii. 11.

And St. Paul thus describes what he had to suffer, from this intestine war, excited in his soul by the desires of the flesh, "I know, *says he*, that there dwelleth not in me, that is, in my flesh, that which is good; for to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me; for I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom. vii. 18. To the same purpose St. James declares, that all our miseries and dissensions arise from our unmortified lusts. "From whence are wars and contentions among you? *says he*, Come they not from this; your concupiscences which war in your members? You covet and have not, you kill and envy, and cannot obtain." Jas. iv. 1. Hence the wise man says, "Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will. If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies" Eccl. xviii. 30. And of the truth of this, we are convinced by experience itself; for, what is the source from whence our troubles of mind commonly arise? Is it not the disappointment of our desires of external objects? we set our hearts upon riches, sensual pleasures, the praise and esteem of others, and the like; we wish for these things, we expect to find happiness in the possession of them; we labour, we toil to acquire them; we are in a continual agitation of mind in pursuit of them; now all

elevated with hope in the view of success, and now as much dejected with fear and sorrow when we meet with disappointments; sometimes tormented with spleen against those who envy or oppose us, sometimes racked with despair, when they get the victory over us. If at last we lose the object of our wishes, we are oppressed with sorrow for the loss of an imaginary happiness we could never have attained; and if we gain our desire, we are vexed with disappointment to find our expectations of happiness so exceedingly frustrated: yet untaught even by experience itself, we set out after some other object with the same ardour, we pursue it amidst the same torments, and we are treated in the end with the same disappointment. So incapable are all external enjoyments to make us happy! and so destructive are they, when we set our hearts upon them, of that internal peace and content of mind, in which alone true happiness consists. The prophet Isaiah thus describes the folly and misery of those who seek their happiness in these things, and not in God. "Your lips, *says he*, have spoken lies, and your tongue uttereth iniquity... They trust in a mere nothing, and speak vanities; they have conceived labour, and brought forth iniquity. They have broken the eggs of asps, and have woven the webs of spiders; he that shall eat of their eggs shall die, and that which is brought out shall be hatched into a basilisk. Their webs shall not be for clothing, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are unprofitable works... their thoughts are unprofitable thoughts, wasting and destruction are in their ways. They have not known the way of peace, and there is no judgment in their steps; their paths are become crooked to them; every one that treadeth in them, knoweth no peace." Isa. lix. 3.

(5.) The setting our hearts on the enjoyment of these external goods of riches, honours, pleasures and the like, and seeking our happiness in them, is not only destructive of that internal quiet and content of mind, which alone can make a man truly happy in this

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this present life ; but, what is of infinitely greater importance, it is always exceedingly dangerous, and for the most part entirely destructive of our eternal happiness in the life to come. Our blessed Saviour declares this in express terms in the gospel, when he says to his disciples, “ Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven ; and again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matt xix. 23. And no wonder ; for it is exceedingly difficult for a person to possess riches and abundance of the good things of this world, and not contract a love and attachment to them ; and when the heart becomes once attached to them, who can conceive the depth of iniquity into which this attachment is capable of plunging the poor soul ? hence the scripture thus cautions us against this danger ; “ If riches abound, set not your heart upon them.” Psa. lxi. 11. Now there are several grievous sins, to which the very possession of riches naturally exposes the poor soul, and experience itself teaches us, how few escape from falling into them ; the word of God attests the same thing, “ If thou be rich, thou shalt not be free from sin.” Eccl. xi. 10. And the reason is, because abundance of riches gives one the means of easily gratifying all his passions, and every desire of his heart, and considering the depravity of our nature, it is not an easy matter to resist the violence of our passions when we have it in our power to indulge them. Hence nothing is more common than to see the rich people of the world become proud, and overbearing, self-conceited and vain glorious ; and the scripture assures us that, “ The house that is very rich, shall be brought to nothing by pride.” Eccl. xxi. 5. Forgetfulness of God and of the concerns of the soul, is another pernicious effect of riches and worldly enjoyments, as fatal experience shows us. Moses was very sensible of this sad effect of worldly prosperity, and therefore foreseeing the great favours of this kind, which God was

was to bestow upon his people in the land of promise, he warmly exhorts them to guard themselves against this delusion. “The Lord thy God, *says he*, . . . will bring thee into a good land . . . a land of wheat and barley, and vineyards . . . a land of oil and honey, where without any want, thou shalt eat thy bread and enjoy abundance of all things . . . that when thou hast eaten and art full, thou mayest bless the Lord thy God, for the land which he hath given thee. *Take heed and beware*, lest at any time thou forget the Lord thy God, and neglect his commandments. . . . Lest, after thou hast eaten and art filled, hast built goodly houses, and dwelt in them; and shalt have herds of oxen and flocks of sheep, and plenty of gold and silver and of all things, *thy heart be lifted up, and thou remember not the Lord thy God* . . . lest thou should say in thy heart: My own might and the strength of my own hand hath atchieved all these things for me. But remember the Lord thy God, that he hath given thee strength.” Deut. viii. The same warning he gives them on several different occasions, and particularly in the sixth chapter of this book of Deuteronomy, which shows how solicitous he was about this matter, and how much he apprehended this fatal effect of worldly prosperity; but foreseeing that they would not observe in future ages his wholesome advice; and that the hearts of his people would be corrupted by the delusions of prosperity, he thus describes the goodness of God to them, and foretells and complains of their ingratitude to their God. “He set his people on high; that he might eat the fruits of the fields, that he might suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone, butter of the herd and milk of the sheep, with the fat of the lambs, and of the rams of the breed of Basan, and goats with the marrow of wheat, and might drink the purest blood of the grape: The beloved *grew fat and kicked*: he grew fat and thick and gross, *he forsook God who made him, and departed from God his saviour*. They provoked him by strange gods, and stirred him up to anger

anger with their abominations." Deut. xxxii. 13. God himself often complains of this by his prophets, and particularly by Osee, where he says, "according to their pastures they were filled and made full; and they lifted up their heart and have forgotten me." Of. xiii. 6. In all which passages we see that pride and a forgetfulness of God are indeed the natural, and but too frequently the fatal consequences of worldly prosperity; and consequently how dangerous it is for our eternal happiness.

Another pernicious consequence of worldly prosperity, and which always accompanies the pride and a forgetfulness of God which it inspires, is, that it hardens our heart, and renders it insensible to all these ordinary means which the divine providence uses for our conversion. "I spoke to thee, *says almighty God*, in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not hear; this hath been thy way from thy youth, because thou hast not heard my voice." Jer. xxii. 21. Job beautifully describes this dismal effect of prosperity, and the miserable end to which it conducts poor souls, in these words; "Their houses are secure and peaceable, and the rod of God is not upon them; their cattle have conceived and failed not; their cow hath calved and is not deprived of her fruit: their little ones go out like a flock, and their children dance and play; they take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ." But where does all this end? he immediately adds, "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." And the reason of this fatal end of worldly prosperity he subjoins, "who have said to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Who is the almighty, that we should serve him? and what doth it profit us if we pray to him?" Job xxi. 9. See here into what a depth of obduracy and insensibility worldly prosperity is capable of plunging the soul; and in what a dismal manner it ends at last; and though almighty God should out of his superabundant mercy sometimes touch their hearts with a sense of their danger, yet these

these good dispositions which he gives them are soon entirely smothered by their attachment to, and solicitude about their worldly enjoyments, as Christ himself assures us in the parable of the sower, where he says, "That which fell among thorns, are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit." Luke xiii. 14. and indeed this is so generally the case, that a rich man, who preserves his innocency in the midst of riches, and keeps his heart upright to God without becoming a slave to his riches, is looked upon in the scripture as a most wonderful person, and a particular blessing is pronounced on him. "Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish, and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures; Who is he? and we will praise him, for he *hath done wonderful things* in his life; who hath been tried thereby, and been made perfect, he shall have glory everlasting; Who could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed; and could do evil things, and hath not done them. Therefore are his goods established in the Lord, Eccl." xxxi. 8.

Besides these more general pernicious effects of worldly prosperity, there are several other sins to which it exposes souls, and with some or other of which it is seldom unaccompanied; such as idleness, which opens a door to all sins; anger and impatience under the smallest trials and contradictions; intemperance and drunkenness, as in the rich glutton in the gospel, and particularly lust and avarice; the first of which almighty God thus declares by his prophet, "How can I be merciful to thee? thy children have forsaken me, and swear by them that are not gods; *I fed them to the full, and they committed adultery*, and rioted in the harlot's house: They are become like amorous horses and stallions; every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord?" Jerem. v. 7. and indeed this fatal effect of riches and worldly prosperity is so natural, considering the corruption of the heart of man, that

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even Solomon with all his wisdom, was not proof against it; for thus the scripture addresseth him upon this head, "Thou didst gather gold as copper, and didst multiply silver as lead, and thou didst bow thyself to women, and by thy body thou wast brought under subjection, thou hast stained thy glory and defiled thy seed, so as to bring wrath upon thy children." Eccl. xlvii. 20.

But the most fatal effect that riches and worldly prosperity has upon the mind of man, is the unhappy attachment that it raises in the heart towards them, and the insatiable desire of always having more and more; and when once this love of money takes possession of the heart of those who have riches, or when the covetous desire of becoming rich gets the ascendant in the mind of those who have them not, it is incredible to what excess of wickedness it is capable of pushing them on. It opens the door at once to hardheartedness towards the poor, to all kinds of injustice, to rapine and oppression, to lying, to perjury, and even to apostacy and murder itself; Hence the scripture declares that, "The love of money is the root of all evil; which some desiring have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows." 1. Tim. vi. 10. and "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale." Eccles. x. 10. and no wonder, for the Holy Ghost assures us, by the mouth of S. Paul, that "They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1. Tim. vi. 9.

David describing the fatal effects of worldly prosperity in those who seek their happiness in it, says, "They are not in the labour of men, neither shall they be scourged like other men; therefore pride hath held them fast; they are covered with their iniquity and their wickedness. Their iniquity hath come forth as it were from fatness, they have passed into the affection

affection of the heart. They have thought and spoken wickedness; they have spoken iniquity on high: They have set their mouth against heaven, and their tongue hath passed through the earth." Ps. lxxii. 5. Here we see the holy prophet declares that their worldly prosperity, their not being in the labour of other men, nor having the same scourges to undergo, nor the same trials and sufferings as they, is the very source and origin of all that impiety which he describes in their conduct; they have abundance of all good things; they have nothing to suffer, *therefore pride hath held them fast*. From all which then it clearly appears how difficult it is for a person in the midst of riches and worldly prosperity to work out his salvation; and that our blessed saviour has the greatest reason for affirming that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And indeed, though the word of God had been silent upon this point, experience itself must convince us of it. How easy is it for a poor labouring man to practise temperance and sobriety? How difficult for one who wallows in riches and abundance, not to run into intemperance and excess? A person who has a weak and tender state of health, and who is always ailing and sick, has not so much as a temptation to numbers of grievous crimes, which one in full health is daily exposed to. Humility, the darling virtue of Jesus Christ, is easily acquired in a low contemptible state of life, exposed to continual humiliations; but how difficult is it to learn that virtue in the midst of honours, glory and applause? In a word, adversity serves to discount the debt we owe to the divine justice for sins already committed; prosperity gives us the means, exposes us to the temptation, and excites in us the desire of committing new sins. Sufferings and afflictions compel us to call upon God and trust in him; pleasures and amusements induce us to forget him. The miseries of life convince us that this world is only a place of banishment, and make us turn our thoughts
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and affections wholly to heaven ; the abundance of worldly enjoyments makes us entirely forget heaven, and cleave with all the powers of the soul to this earth. In troubles and crosses we have an inexhaustible mine of merit in the sight of God, by the continual exercise of humility, patience and conformity to his divine will ; in the possession of worldly happiness we find a violent incitement to vice, from the ability it affords of committing it, and the encouragement it gives to all our passions. How great advantage then has a state of worldly adversity to that of prosperity, with regard to the facility of working out our salvation, and securing our eternal happiness in the world to come?

Now our divine Master was perfectly aware of all this : He well knew how impossible it is for any thing in this life fully to content the heart of man, and what a source of misery it is to our souls to place our affections on riches and sensual enjoyments, and to seek for happiness in them ; he well knew that the most ample possession of all that this world can afford, instead of procuring that internal peace and content of mind, in which alone true happiness consists, is entirely subversive of it, and for the most part serves only to make us the more miserable ; and he was perfectly sensible of the immense difficulty of working out our eternal salvation, and of securing that one thing necessary, in the midst of worldly prosperity ; and on all these accounts, he lays it down as an essential and fundamental condition of our being his true disciples, that we take off our affections from all inordinate love and attachment to any creature, that we fly from all inordinate desire of riches, and concurs, and sensual pleasures ; that we mortify and deny our passions, instead of indulging them ; in a word, that we never seek for happiness in the enjoyments of this world, but in him alone, in his holy love, and in doing his will.

§ 2. *We must not seek for Happiness in
Worldly Things.*

Q. 4. What is the doctrine of the word of God concerning this so necessary a condition of our being true christians?

A. It is contained in the following particulars.

1. Many dreadful woes are pronounced in scripture against those who set their hearts on the things of this world, and seek their happiness in them. Thus; “Wo to you that are wealthy in Zion, and to you that have confidence in the mountain of Samaria . . . you that are separated unto the evil day, and that approach to the throne of iniquity. You that sleep upon beds of ivory, and are wanton in your couches: that eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the herd; you that sing to the sound of the psaltery . . . you that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the best ointments . . . The Lord God hath sworn by his own soul, saith the Lord, the God of hosts, I detest the pride of Jacob, and I hate his houses, and I will deliver up the city with the inhabitants thereof: And if there remain ten men in one house, they also shall die.” Amos vi. “He that loveth gold, *saith the wise man*, shall not be justified, and he that followeth after corruption shall be filled with it. Many have been brought to fall for gold, and the beauty thereof hath been their ruin. Gold is a stumbling block to them that sacrifice to it: Wo to them that eagerly follow after it, and every fool shall perish by it.” Eccl. xxxi 5. Our blessed Saviour in the gospel is most precise on this subject, “Wo to you that are rich, *says he*, for you have your consolation. Wo to you that are filled; for you shall hunger. Wo to you that laugh now; for you shall mourn and weep. Wo to you when men shall bless you; for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets.” Luke

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vi. 24. And St. James tells us in a very affecting manner in what this wo consists. "Go to now, ye rich men, *says he*, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored to yourselves wrath against the last days." Ja. v. 1. Such are the woes pronounced against those that set their hearts on worldly enjoyments.

(2.) There are many and great blessings promised to those who seek not their happiness in the enjoyments of this life; but who chearfully renounce their deceitful allurements. Thus we are told by the prophet Isaiah, that the Messias should have for a principal part of his office, to comfort and relieve those who live in affliction, deprived of the vain enjoyment of worldly happiness; and that he would be sent "To heal the contrite of heart; and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up . . . to comfort all that mourn, . . . and to give them a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of grief." Is. lxi. 1. And God himself, speaking to those who seek their happiness in this life, and as the prophet expresses it, *who set a table for fortune, and offer libations upon it*, thus declares their misery, and the happiness which he has laid up for his faithful servants. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; behold my servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry; behold my servants shall drink, and you shall be thirsty; behold my servants shall rejoice, and you shall be confounded; behold my servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, and you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for grief of spirit." Is. lxxv. 13. And in the gospel, our blessed Saviour begins his divine sermon upon the mount with pronouncing a solemn blessing upon all such as take off their hearts from the objects of earthly happiness, and seek for

their happiness only in God ; “ Blessed are the poor in spirit, *says he*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice-sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all that is evil against you for my sake : Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.” Mat. v. 1.

(3.) We are expressly commanded not to seek for happiness in earthly enjoyments, nor set our hearts upon them, but to consider ourselves only as pilgrims and strangers in this world, travelling towards our heavenly country, and to set our affections only upon that never-ending bliss which awaits us there. Thus our blessed Saviour gives this command to all his followers, “ Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal ; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal ; for where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.” Matt. vi. 19. And St. Paul looks upon this holy disposition of soul, as a sign of our being risen with Christ to a newness of life, and as a necessary consequence of the same. “ If you be risen with Christ, *says he*, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God ; mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth.” Colos. iii. 1. “ For here we have no lasting city ; but we seek one to come.” Heb. xiii. 14. And therefore, “ We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal,

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poral, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know, that if our earthly house of this dwelling be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. iv. ult. and v. 1. *For which reason*, "Dearly beloved, *says St. Peter*, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul." 1 Pet. ii. 11.

(4.) We are assured that it is impossible for us to set our hearts and affections upon the enjoyments of this world, and seek for happiness in them, and at the same time to be in friendship with our God. "No man can serve two masters, *says Jesus Christ*. For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Mat. vi. 4. For this reason St. James calls all those adulterers, who want to divide their heart between God and the world, and declares to them, that by so doing, they in effect renounce the friendship of God entirely. "Adulterers, *says he*, know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend to this world, becomes an enemy of God." Ja. iv. 4. And therefore, St. John concludes in this affectionate manner; "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever." 1 Ja. ii. 15. Here we see, that *the concupiscence of the flesh*, which is the love of sensual pleasures, *the concupiscence of the eyes*, which is the love of riches, and *the pride of life*, which is the love of one's own supposed excellency, and of the praise and esteem of others, are the three things which properly speaking is meant by the *world*, in scripture language, and the wisdom of the world con-

sists in procuring these things; and we are assured, that if we set our affections on these things, and seek for happiness by indulging our natural inclinations towards them, the love of God is not in us, and consequently we can have no part with him. And no wonder, considering the great opposition there is between this unhappy wisdom of the world, which seeks only after carnal and earthly enjoyments, and the holy Spirit of God. St. Paul describes this opposition in strong terms. "They that are according to the flesh, mind the things that are of the flesh; but they that are according to the spirit, mind the things that are of the spirit. For the wisdom of the flesh is death, but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace. Because the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God . . . and they who are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. viii. 5. Again he tells us, that "The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand." 1 Cor. ii. 14. And this is what our Saviour himself has declared to his apostles, when, promising to send them the Holy Ghost, he said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you . . . the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him." Jo. xiv. 17. Now, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Rom. viii. 9. But nothing more clearly shows us the extreme opposition there is betwixt this unhappy world, with all its enjoyments, and Jesus Christ, than the way he expresses himself in the prayer he made to his Father, the night before his passion; for in the midst of that fervent prayer for his followers, he adds this dreadful expression, "I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me; because they are thine." Jo. xvii. 9. Such then is the world and its happiness, with all its maxims and wisdom; an enemy to God, continually opposing him, and on that account so much abhorred by Jesus Christ, that he refuses even to pray for it! It is with great reason then that St. Paul thus warmly

warmly exhorts us to have no connection with it. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your body a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service : and be not conformed to this world, but be ye reformed in the newness of your mind." Rom. xii. 2. He even assures us that Jesus Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present wicked world." Gal. i. 4. And St. James gives it as one of the essential parts of true religion "to keep one's self unspotted from this world." Ja i. 27.

(5.) In consequence of all this, we are not only forbidden to set our hearts upon the enjoyments of this world, or to seek our happiness in them, but we are expressly commanded, if we wish to belong to Jesus Christ, and to be his disciples, by self-denial and mortification to break off and root out from our souls all those natural ties and inclinations which we have to these sensual enjoyments, to conceive a holy hatred against that corruption of our nature, which so strongly inclines us to seek after them, and to wage a continual war against that depravity of our self-love, which by its incredible attachment to all those sensual objects that gratify its lusts, is the greatest and most dangerous enemy of our souls. Thus our blessed Saviour lays down this self-denial as the first step in his service ; "If any man, *says he*, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Luke ix. 23. And to show how strictly he requires this from us, he adds in another place, "Whosoever does not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple . . . and every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 27. 33. And the reason why he so strictly requires this of his followers is, because while our self-love is alive in us, and all its worldly lusts, those enemies to God, continue to reign in our heart, it is impossible for us to obey the holy law of God and save our souls ; the first step therefore which we must take, is to kill and destroy this

this self love by mortification and self denial; this our Saviour illustrates by the similitude of a grain of wheat; saying, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit;" and then he immediately adds, "He that loveth his life shall lose it, but he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it into life eternal" John xii. 24. To show us that our self-love and all its corrupt inclinations must die by self denial and mortification, before we can bring forth the fruits of christian perfection, and that we must be willing even to lose our life itself, rather than continue slaves to our self love, if we want to keep it to life eternal. St. Paul in like manner, after enjoining us to set our minds upon the joys of heaven, and not upon the perishable goods of this life, immediately adds, the mortification of our passions as the necessary means to accomplish this; "Mortify therefore your members," *says he*, which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols; for which things sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of unbelief." Col. iii. 5. He repeats the same thing in another place, by assuring us that the lusts of the flesh are the source of all our sins, which exclude us from heaven, and therefore concludes thus; "I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another . . . now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are, fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, &c. of which I foretell you as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God." Eph. v. 16. Hence he declares to us, that "If we live according to the flesh we shall die, but if by the spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live." Rom. viii. 13. Where we see that this mortification of our corrupt flesh is declared to be a necessary condition of salvation. And on this

account

account he gives the fulfilling this condition as a distinguishing sign of our belonging to Christ. "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences." Gal. v. 24. Nay, he assures us, that it was one of the principal ends for which Christ came into this world, to teach us this so necessary a virtue. "The grace of God our Saviour, *says he*, hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that *denying all ungodliness and worldly desires*, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world." Tit. ii. 11. It is true indeed, that the practice of this self denial and mortification is difficult to flesh and blood, but we must remember that salvation is at stake, that none is crowned, *except he strive lawfully*. 2 Tim. ii. 5. that we fight for an *incorruptible crown*, 1 Cor. ix. a *never fading crown of glory*, 1 Pet. v. 4. for an *inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved for us in heaven*." 1 Pet. i. 4. for the possession of heaven itself; and our Saviour expressly declares, that "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent carry it away." Mat. xi. 12. Consequently there is no medium; either we must do violence to our corrupt nature, denying ourselves, and mortifying our passions and lusts after the enjoyments of this world, as Christ so strictly requires of us, or there will be no heaven for us. And on this account it is, that our blessed Saviour gives us all this warm and affectionate exhortation, "Enter ye in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat; how narrow is the gate, and strait the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!" Mat. vii. 13. Those who seek their happiness in the enjoyments of this world, walk indeed in a broad road, where self love is under no restraint, where their passions and lusts have full scope, and where every liberty is taken to gratify all the desires of flesh and blood; but alas! they are so far from getting their aim, or finding that happiness which they seek, that they find nothing in all these things but *vanity* and

and vexation of spirit, and at last end in eternal misery and perdition. Whereas they who seek their happiness only in God, walk, it is true, in a narrow road, where self love and all its lusts are crucified, and violence is done to all our corrupted inclinations ; but they soon find to their happy experience, that this proves a source of real peace and content to the soul here, and leads them to eternal life and everlasting bliss hereafter : It is a narrow road, but it is a road where all the difficulty is only in the first beginnings, for when these are courageously overcome, and they begin to *taste how sweet the Lord is*, they find their *way beautiful, and all their paths, the paths of peace*, Pro. iii. 17. For as the Holy Ghost himself declares, “ I will lead thee by the paths of equity, which *when thou shalt have entered*, thy steps shall not be straitened ; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not find a stumbling block.” Pro. iv. 11.

Q. 5. Nothing can be more plain and decisive, than all those testimonies of the eternal truth are, to show us the necessity of not seeking after the enjoyments of this world, but of mortifying our natural attachments towards them : But how can all this be reconciled with the maxims and practice of the great bulk of christians, which are just the reverse of this heavenly doctrine of the Son of God ?

A. Or rather, how can the maxims and practice of the great bulk of christians be reconciled with these divine truths ? It is indeed a source of melancholy reflections, to compare the conduct of christians now-a-days with the rules of christianity ; and to see how much the spirit of the world with all its maxims, has intruded itself into the hearts of men, and usurped the sovereign power there, notwithstanding the above dreadful comminations denounced against the world and all its lovers, by the great God. To hear the way that many christians speak, and to see how they behave, one would be apt to believe that the world is the only God they adore, whose favour they court, upon whose protection they depend, who

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whose laws they revere, and whom alone they study to please. *What the world will think, and what the world will say,* seems to be the only ultimate motives that decide in their deliberations; and though Almighty God has expressly declared that, "If any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." 1 Cor. iii. 18. Yet how few true christians are to be found who are willing to be thought fools for Christ's sake, and who are not ready upon every occasion to transgress the most sacred duties of a christian, for fear of being laughed at by the world? Whatever lengths they go in all the extravagances of the world, in luxury, in high living, in dress, in dangerous and sinful amusements, the common excuse is, *We must be neighbour-like; one cannot be singular to be pointed at; there is no living in the world without complying with its ways; we only do as others do; there are many who do much worse than we,* and the like; and under such pretexts as these, they give way to all the inclinations of self-love, and to every impulse of curiosity, sensuality and vanity. Such a conduct as this, in those who pretend to be disciples of a crucified Saviour, cannot indeed be reconciled with the belief of his gospel; but the truth is, they do not believe it, as delivered by its divine author; blinded by their passions and worldly attachments, they cannot understand it in the sense intended by him; immersed in sensual pleasures, slaves to the esteem and opinion of the world, and grasping at riches as their only good, their understandings are darkened that they cannot see, and their hearts so perverted, that they will not believe the plainest declarations of the Son of God, "The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand." 1 Cor. ii. 14. When the Jews refused to believe in Christ, he was not surprized, but said, "How can you believe, who receive glory from one another, and the glory which is

is from God alone, you do not seek?" Jo. v. 44. And even those among their rulers who did believe him, yet durst not confess him, "for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." Jo. xiii. 43. And when our Saviour had declared some very important doctrines to the people, "The Pharisees, who *were covetous*, heard all these things, and they derided him." Luke xvi. 14. And such is the unhappy case, with these worldly minded christians; they cannot bear the light of his heavenly doctrine, so contrary to the dispositions of their hearts, and therefore they fall upon a thousand shifts to interpret his words their own way, and by such limitations, restrictions and exceptions as they are pleased to annex to them, they endeavour to modify them according to their own fancy; for being determined not to regulate their sentiments and conduct by the gospel, they flatter themselves they can reconcile the gospel to their worldly maxims and practice. And thus they not only strive to make friendship with the world themselves, but even want to make friendship betwixt Jesus Christ and the world, notwithstanding the infinite and irreconcilable opposition which he himself has declared there is between them. But such nominal christians would do well to remember, that to walk in the broad road with *the many*, is to walk in the *road that leads to destruction*; that *many are called, but few are chosen*; and that those happy few are they who walk in the *narrow road that leads to life*.

§. 3. *True Happiness only to be found in God.*

Q. 6. But if we must live in a continual self-denial and in the daily mortification of our own evil inclinations, where is the happiness to be found in the service of God?

A. True happiness, as we have seen above, is only

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to be found in solid peace and content of mind. Now this internal peace, this content of mind, which the world with all its enjoyments cannot give, is the gift of God; and he has expressly promised to bestow it, as their portion, on his faithful servants, who sincerely love him and keep his holy commandments, "Peace I leave you, *says our blessed saviour to all such*, my peace I give you; not as the world giveth do I give you; let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid." Jo.. xiv. 27. Here you see he distinguishes his divine peace from the false delusive peace, which the world giveth, and shows it to be of a very superior nature indeed; a peace which calms all trouble of mind, dispels all fears and which is so far above any sensual enjoyment, that S. Paul assures us *it surpasseth all understanding* Phil. iv. 7. And our blessed saviour himself declares that the joy which he bestows on his servants is a joy which rejoices the heart, and of which no creature can deprive them, "I will see you again, *says he*, and your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man shall take from you." Jo. xvi. 22. This peace of God then is the portion of the just, it is the inheritance of the servants of God even in this life; this is the hundredfold of all they leave for God of their worldly enjoyments, which makes them immensely more happy and content in their own minds than all the possessions of this world can possibly do. If therefore Jesus Christ require, of all his followers to take off their affections from the things of this world; if he lays it down as the first step in his service *to deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow him*; if he declares to his disciples, that they shall be hated by the world, that they shall be persecuted, that in the world they shall have sorrow and pressure; all this is the effect of his sincere love to us and his earnest desire of our real happiness; he well knows that no worldly enjoyments can make us happy; he knows on the contrary, that if we set our hearts on worldly objects they will effectually make us most unhappy; he knows that that sacred peace of mind in which alone

true happiness consists, and which is his gift, cannot possibly have place in the soul if she be enslaved to the love of the world; he knows, in fine, that it is impossible for us to be his disciples and faithfully obey his commandments, if we seek for our happiness in the enjoyments of the world, and therefore he tells us plainly, that we must renounce ourselves and all earthly things, and break off all our irregular attachments to the world, in order to be truly his disciples; but then in place of all the vain pleasures of the world he promises us in the most solemn manner, that internal peace and content of mind which alone can make us truly happy even in this life, and which is a prelude of that eternal peace and celestial joy which shall be our happy portion for ever in the life to come.

Q. 7. But is not some degree of the goods of this life necessary for our subsistence whilst we are in this world? and must we not have some concern about that?

A. Most undoubtedly; And our blessed master is so far from imagining that his faithful servants should be deprived of corporal necessities, that he even assures us, he himself shall take care that nothing of this kind shall be wanting to them! He indeed forbids his followers to be solicitous, or to disturb their mind with a vain anxiety about what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithall we shall be clothed, because he knows such solicitude would only destroy their internal happiness, and be an impediment to the good of their soul; but he exhorts us to rely on the providence of our heavenly father, *who knows that we have need of such things*, and then passes his sacred promise that *if we seek first the kingdom of God and his justice all these things shall be added to us.* Matth. iv. ult. Hence we see that God Almighty is engaged to provide the necessities of this life for his faithful servants, by blessing the lawful works of their hands, and giving them the fruits of their labours, not indeed in such abundance as he foresees would flatter their passions and endanger their hearts to be carried away after these things so as to forget their God; but in

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in such abundance as is most expedient for the good of their souls, and for securing their eternal salvation. And this is all which any christian, who wishes to save his soul should ever desire to have of earthly goods, as S. Paul beautiful expresses in these words; "Godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world; and certainly we can carry nothing out; but having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content. 1. Tim. vi. 6. And even in the old law, the holy servants of God were so sensible of the danger of having more of the goods of this world than was necessary for their subsistence, that they earnestly prayed to God to deliver them not only from too great abundance but even from the very desire of having it. Thus the wiseman says to God "Two things I have asked of thee, deny them not to me before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lying words. Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessities of life; lest perhaps being filled, I should be tempted to deny and say, Who is the Lord? or being compelled by poverty I should steal, and forswear the name of my God." Prov. xxx. 7. And in another place, "O Lord, Father, and God of my life, give me not haughtiness of my eyes, and turn away from me all coveting: take from me the greediness of the belly; and let not the lusts of the flesh take hold of me, and give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind. Eccles. xxiii. 4. So also David thus begs of God "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness, turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity. Ps. cxviii. 36.

Q. 8. Does the scripture give us any particular description of the happiness of the just in this life?

A. Most beautiful are the descriptions which the scripture gives us of their happiness, both as to their having all sufficiency of the necessities of this life, their being supported under all their sufferings, and the internal peace of mind which they enjoy; and most engaging are the promises made in these divine writings

ings for this purpose. "Blessed is the man whom God correcteth . . . In famine he shall deliver thee from death, and in battle from the hand of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, and thou shalt not fear calamity when it cometh. In destruction and famine thou shalt laugh and shalt not be afraid of the beasts of the earth . . . and thou shalt know that thy *tabernacle is in peace* and visiting thy beauty, thou shalt not sin." Job v. "If thou wilt put away from thee the iniquity that is in thy hand, and let not injustice remain in thy tabernacle . . . thou shalt have confidence, hope being set before thee, and being buried thou shalt sleep secure; thou shalt take rest and there shall be none to make thee afraid; and many shall intreat thy face." Job xi. 14. 18. "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet: blessed is the man that hopeth in him. Fear ye the Lord, all ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good. Come, children, harken to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Who is the man that desireth life, who loveth to see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile; turn away from evil and do good, seek after peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears unto their prayers. But the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The just cried and the Lord heard them and delivered them out of all their troubles . . . Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken." Ps. xxxiii. "Trust in the Lord and do good and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches. Delight in the Lord and he will give thee the requests of thy heart . . . The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace . . . *Better is a little to the just than the great riches of the wicked . . .* they

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they shall not be confounded in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be filled . . . with the Lord shall the steps of a man be directed, and he shall like well his way. When he shall fall, he shall not be bruised, *for the Lord putteth his hand under him.* I have been young, and now am old, and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread. He sheweth mercy and lendeth all the day long, and his seed shall be in blessing." Ps. xxxvi. "*Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures without content.*" Prov. xv. 16. "When the ways of man shall please the Lord, he will convert even his enemies to peace. *Better is a little with justice, than great revenues with iniquity.*" Prov. xvi. 7. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and is rich in prudence. The purchasing thereof is better than the merchandize of silver, and her fruit than the choicest and purest gold: She is more precious than all riches; and all the things that are desired are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and glory. Her ways are beautiful *and all her paths are peaceable.* She is a tree of life to them that shall lay hold on her; and he that shall retain her is blessed." Prov. iii. 13. Now thus divine wisdom is thus described in scripture. "The word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom, and her ways are everlasting commandments . . . God created her in the Holy Ghost . . . And he poured her out upon all his works, and upon all flesh according to his gift, and hath given her to them that love him. The fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy, and gladness, and length of days. With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed. *The love of God is honourable wisdom . . . and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom . . .* The fear of the Lord is the religiousness of knowledge. Religiousness shall keep and

justify the heart, it shall give joy and gladness. It shall go well with him that feareth the Lord, and in the days of his end he shall be blessed. To fear God is the fulness of wisdom, and fulness is from the fruits thereof. She shall fill all her house with her increase, and the store-houses with her treasures. The fear of the Lord is a crown of wisdom, filling up peace and the fruit of salvation." Eccl. i.

See here, among many other such passages, in what an endearing manner the holy scriptures speak upon this subject; and as it is the spirit of God himself who dictated these sacred promises, there can be no doubt of their being fully accomplished on his side; and hence St. Paul, fully sensible of the happiness of serving God, says, "*Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*" 1 Tim. iv. 8. If therefore, we do not find the effects of these promises very frequent among us, the fault is entirely on our part; we serve God only by halves, we do not give ourselves up to him with that unreserved confidence which would entitle us to such happiness; but if we consider the lives of the saints of God, there we shall see these sacred declarations of holy writ accomplished to their full extent; call to mind the histories of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, of Joseph, of Moses, of the whole people of Israel in the desert, of the prophets Elias, and Eliseus, of David when persecuted by Saul, of Daniel and his companions, with thousands of others in the christian Church. In them we see how wonderfully their heavenly father protects and defends those that fear him, and provides for his servants what is necessary for their support in this life; and tho', for their greater advantage, he does not always give them the superfluities of temporal goods, yet he gives them more content and heart-felt satisfaction in the moderate sufficiency which he bestows upon them, than the rich ones of the world can procure from all their abundance; nay, their very prayers, fastings, tears, and labours give them a far greater
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delight and satisfaction, than all the joys and pleasures of the world could ever have done, which shows to a demonstration by experience itself, that the promise of Christ is abundantly fulfilled in them, seeing what they received is a hundred and a hundred times better than whatever they left for his sake; for instead of the false and apparent goods they forsook, he gives them such as are true and real; instead of the uncertain perishable riches which they abandon, he gives such as are certain and permanent, *your joy*, says he, *no man shall take from you*; he gives them spiritual consolations instead of corporal; ease of mind instead of care; peace and tranquility instead of anxiety and trouble; and virtuous and delightful life instead of that which is vicious and tormenting. And though the perfection of the rewards of virtue in this life be only found in the perfect followers of Christ, yet such is his infinite goodness, that he bestows them in a proportionable degree even upon beginners; and the more they advance in his service, in conquering their own passions and in the observance of his holy commandments, the more abundantly he bestows these favours on them, and the more they feel, to their own happy experience, *how sweet the Lord is, and how happy all these are, who trust in him!*

§ 4. *How happy the Just are even in their Sufferings.*

Q. 9. But how can all this stand with what both scripture and experience teach us, that the good and virtuous are generally most afflicted in this world, whilst the wicked are prosperous and flourishing? This we daily see with our eyes, and the scripture declares, that "many are the afflictions of the just." Ps. xxxiii. 20. that "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. iii. 12. and "that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." Acts xiv. 21.

A.

A. The truth of what is here asserted is most undoubted, but instead of being any objection to what the same scriptures declare of the happiness of the just, there is nothing wherein the greatness and sincerity of their happiness is more manifest; as will evidently appear from the following considerations.

(1.) Sufferings and tribulations of all kinds are the appendage of human nature in its present corrupted state; from the king to the beggar none are exempted from them; pains, diseases, loss of friends, poverty, disgrace, calumny, and other such miseries, are incident to every mortal; and no one can always be free from some one or other of these scourges; thus the scripture declares, that "man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries." Job xiv. 1. "Great labour is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into the mother of all. Their thoughts and fears of the heart, their imagination of things to come, and the day of their end: from him that sitteth on a throne of glory; to him that is humbled in earth and ashes; from him that weareth the purple and beareth the crown, even to him that is covered with rough linen; wrath, envy, trouble, unquietness, and the fear of death, continual anger and strife: and in the time of rest upon his bed, the sleep of the night changeth his knowledge. A little and as nothing is his rest, and afterwards in sleep, as in the day of keeping watch, he is troubled in the vision of the heart, as if he had escaped in the day of battle." Eccl. xl. 1. If therefore the servants of God have their share of these sufferings, we need not wonder; they are all sons of Adam, born of women, and consequently must be subject to the common curse of their nature; but in this they are no worse than the wicked, who have their share of these things as well as the just. But,

(2.) The word of God assures us that all these trials are much more weighty and severe upon the wicked

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wicked than upon the just ; for in the last cited text from Ecclesiasticus, immediately after that enumeration of evils, it is added, " Such things happen to all flesh, from man even to beast ; and *upon sinners are sevenfold more*. Moreover, death and bloodshed, strife and sword, oppressions, famine and affliction, and scourges, *all these things are created for the wicked.*" Eccl. xl. 8. And in an other place he says, " Fire, hail, famine and death, all these were created for vengeance ; the teeth of beasts, and scorpions and serpents, and the sword *taking vengeance upon the ungodly unto destruction.*" Eccl. xxxix. 35. From which it appears, that though we sometimes see examples of good men who have many sufferings and tribulations in this world to struggle with ; and also of wicked people, who prosper in all their affairs and are not scourged like other men ; yet in general, this is not so ; for that taking in the whole, even the external miseries of life are *sevenfold more upon sinners*, than upon the just.

(3.) What renders all these common tribulations of life much more severe upon sinners, than upon the true servants of God, is this, that the former, setting their hearts upon the possession of earthly enjoyments, seek their happiness in them ; and consequently, when deprived of them, and exposed to their opposite evils, must suffer exceedingly in their interior, from grief, vexation, despair, and the like violent passions ; so that in them the exterior misery of the body, seldom or never is unaccompanied with the internal misery of the mind, which makes them miserable indeed, beyond expression. But the true servants of God, whose daily exercise is to take off their affections more and more from all worldly enjoyments, who seek not for happiness in these things, but in the accomplishment of the will of God and in serving him, when any of the common miseries of life comes upon them, though their piety does not divest them of the feelings of human nature, and they are sensible of the impressions their sufferings naturally make upon their

their senses or appetites, yet it generally rests there, it goes no farther, it does not penetrate to the mind, it does not disturb the quiet of the soul; or if it should begin to excite any small commotion there, as may be the case in those who are not as yet well advanced in the paths of virtue, yet even in them, such commotions are soon suppressed, and their wonted calm recovered; and the more they advance in solid piety, the easier this is done, till at last the very external miseries of life become a subject of joy to them, and hence the scripture says, "*Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad; but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.*" Prov. xii. 21. So that even in the midst of external sufferings, the just man possesses internal happiness, which is itself the only true happiness, and at the same time serves to alleviate the burden, and to blunt the sting of external afflictions.

(4.) All the tribulations which come upon any person in this life, of whatever kind they be, and from whatever immediate occasion they arise, all come originally from the hand of God, who disposes of all these things according to the views of his divine providence. Now when God sends tribulations upon the wicked, he is provoked to do so by their sins, and he sends them in quality of their judge in his wrath, as punishments and just judgments upon them; and as they, from the malice of their hearts, receive them with impatience and murmuring against providence, by so doing they provoke him to redouble his vengeance upon them; hence they are exceedingly tormented by their sufferings and become doubly miserable under them. But when he sends trials upon the just, he sends them in quality of a father in his mercy, as necessary chastisements for their good and for their correction; and therefore he always proportions them to their needs, and to the strength they have to bear them, and to make a proper use of them, and thus they become a source of great good to them, for *all things work together for good to them that love God* Rom. viii. 28. We see all this verified in the way

God treated the Egyptians and his own people, of which the wise man says, "By what things their enemies were punished . . . by the same things they in their need were benefited . . . for when they were tried and chastised with mercy, they knew how the wicked were judged with wrath and tormented; for thou (O Lord) didst admonish and try them as a father: but the others, as a severe king, thou didst examine and condemn." Wisd. xi. 5. &c. and a little after he adds, "With what circumspection hast thou judged thy own children, to whose parents thou has sworn and made covenants of good promises? Therefore whereas thou chastisest us, thou scourgest our enemies many ways." Wisd. xii. 21. On this account the sufferings of the just, not only lose their sting, but they become even a source of great comfort to them; they consider them as sent by their loving father, not for their destruction but for their edification, and therefore receive them as signs of his love to them, who by means of these trials procures the greatest of benefits to their souls; for they well know that, "Whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Heb. xii. 6. and therefore they say to themselves, with St. Paul, "We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much more obey the father of spirits and live? and they indeed for a few days chastised us for *their own pleasure*; but he, for *our profit*, that we might be partakers of his holiness; for *though* no chastisement for the present seemeth to bring with it joy, but sorrow; yet afterwards it will yield to them that are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice." Heb. xii. 9. Hence the scripture pronounceth those blessed whom God corrects, on account of the great advantages that flow from his correction; "Blessed is the man whom God correcteth; refuse not therefore the chastising of the Lord: for he woundeth and cureth; he striketh and his hand shall heal." Job. v. 7. How light and easy does this consideration make
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the trials of the just, whilst sinners in their tribulations have no such consolation, but either think nothing of God at all, and thus become a prey to the most distressing passions; or if any sense of religion awakens their conscience, it is only to torment them with the gnawing worm of bitter remorse, which tells them they richly deserve all that is come upon them. Happy would it be for them if this thought would turn them to repentance, and force them to have recourse to him for help who alone can help them!

(5.) Another thing which contributes exceedingly to alleviate and sweeten the afflictions of the just, is the special assistance that Almighty God gives them, to support them in all their distresses. The scripture displays this to us in different points of view, (1.) *That God is in company with them in their tribulations, to help them under them, and to deliver them.* "He shall cry to me, says Almighty God, and I will hear him: *I am with him in his trouble, I will deliver him and I will glorify him.*" Psa. xc. 15. "When he shall fall he shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth his hand under him." Psa. xxxvi. 24. *The Lord is nigh to them* that are of a contrite heart, and he will save the humble of spirit. Many are the afflictions of the just, but out of them all will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken." Psa. xxxiii. 19. "Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him, and on them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their souls from death and feed them in famine." Psa. xxxii. 18. "Thus saith the high and the eminent that inhabiteth eternity, and his name is holy, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, and with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite." Isa. lvii. 15. (2.) *That he is always ready to hear their prayers* and grant them their petitions; thus, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just; and his ears unto their prayers . . . the just cried and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of all their

their troubles." Psa. xxxiii. 16. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Psa. l. 15. "I fought the Lord and he heard me, and he delivered me from all my troubles. Come ye to him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded; this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him; and shall deliver them." Psa. xxxiii. 5. (3.) That *he turns their affliction into joy and gladness*, "We have passed through fire and water, *says David to God*, and thou hast brought us out into a refreshment." Psa. lxx. 12. "How great troubles hast thou shewed me, many and grievous? and turning thou hast brought me to life, and hast brought me back again from the depths of the earth. Thou hast multiplied thy magnificence, and turning to me thou hast comforted me." Psa. lxx. 20. Nay, "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul." Psa. xciii. 19. for thou art not delighted in our being lost; because after a storm thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping thou pourest in joyfulness. Be thy name, O God of Israel, blessed for ever." Tob. iii. 22. Witness Job, Joseph, Daniel, the three children, Susannah, and others without number. How many grounds of comfort has the just man in the consideration of these truths, to support him under his troubles, and make them easy to him in the internal man, yea even to make him happy in his mind within, which is the only real happiness, though without, and in the eyes of the world, he labours under many tribulations? But as for wicked men in their tribulations, "The countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Psa. xxxiii. 17. To the Lord God says, "Behold I will set my face upon you for evil and not for good." Jere xlv. 11. "For evil doers shall be cut off... yet a little while and the wicked shall not be: and thou shalt

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seek his place and shalt not find it . . . because the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord, presently after they shall be honoured and exalted, shall come to nothing and vanish like smoke." Psa. xxxvi. 9. 20.

(6.) Lastly, what in a particular manner supports the just man, in the day of tribulation, and not only alleviates the weight of his afflictions, but even makes them matter of joy and gladness to him, is the knowledge he has of the many and great advantages which they bring to the soul, and that they are sent by the fatherly hand of his good God, on purpose to procure him these advantages.

Q. 10. What then are the ends which God has in sending afflictions and crosses upon his faithful servants in this life?

A. Some of the principal ends which God has in sending tribulations upon his own servants, and which in a particular manner contribute to alleviate their burden and comfort them under their afflictions are these following :

(1) *To try them* ; that is, to see whether or not they be sincere and in earnest in his service ; whether they serve him for any present interest of their self love, or for his own sake, and because it is their duty and eternal interest to do so. Thus when God praised Job's virtue, satan said, " Doth Job fear God in vain ? Hast not thou made a fence for him and his house, and all his substance round about ; and blessed the works of his hands, and his possession hath increased on the earth ? But stretch forth thy hand a little and touch all that he hath ; and see if he blesseth thee not to thy face." Job. i. 9. Upon this, leave was given to satan to try Job ; which was done by the most severe afflictions ; under all which, Job gave proof of the sincerity of his virtue in the most convincing manner, for " In all these things Job sinned not with his lips, nor spoke he any foolish thing against God." ver. 22. Instead of that he blessed and praised God for all his sufferings, nay, he carried his fidelity so far that when his friends were insulting over him, he said, " Although he (God) should kill me,

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I will trust in him." Job. xiii. 15. and in another place he says " He has tried me as gold that passeth through the fire : my foot hath followed his steps, I have kept his way, and have not declined from it."

Job xxiii. 10. So also when the angel Raphael discovered himself to the good old man Tobias whose severe trials had been no less remarkable than his virtuous works and piety ; he said to him, " Because thou wast acceptable to God, *it was necessary* that temptations *should prove thee.*" Tob. xii. 13. and his noble behaviour under these temptations is most remarkable, for when he was deprived of his sight,

the scripture says : " Now this trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might

be given to posterity of his patience, as also of holy Job. For whereas he had always feared God from

his infancy, and kept his commandments, he repined not against God because the evil of blindness had befallen him ; but continued immoveable in the fear of

God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life : for as the kings insulted over Job, so his relations and kinsmen mocked at his life, saying, where is thy

hope, for which thou gavest alms and buriedst the dead ? But Tobias rebuked them, saying : speak not so, for we are children of saints, and look for that

life, which God will give to them that never change their faith from him. Tob. ii. 12. Hence the scripture saith " The furnace trieth the potter's vessels ; and the trial of affliction, just men." Eccles.

xxvii. 6. or " as silver is tried in the fire, and gold in the furnace, so the Lord trieth the hearts." Prov.

xvii. 3. " gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation." Eccles.

ii. 5. So Abraham was tempted, and being proved by many tribulations, was made the friend of God. So Isaac, so Jacob, so Moses, *and all that have pleased*

God, passed through many tribulations remaining faithful." Judith viii. 22. Now this consideration is a vast consolation to the servants of God amidst their severest afflictions ; for if even among men like ourselves, the love we

have for a friend, or the desire we have of approving ourselves as attached to those whose praise or esteem we court, makes us even love to have an opportunity of showing the sincerity of our regard for them, though it be through sufferings and dangers; how much more must a sincere love to God, and the desire of showing our fidelity to him sweeten every trial or affliction we may have to undergo for his sake? especially when we know, that though our earthly friends may not be sensible of what we suffer for them, or not put a just value upon it, or not be able to reward it, our heavenly father well knows every thing we undergo for him, is perfectly sensible of the real value of it, and will reward it not only to the full of what it deserves in his sight, but superabundantly, yea infinitely above what we can conceive or imagine, “afflicted in a few things, *says his holy word*, in many they shall be well rewarded; because God hath tried them and found them worthy of himself; as gold in the furnace he *hath proved them*, and as a victim of a holocaust he hath received them, and in time there shall be respect had to them. The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds, they shall judge nations and rule over people, and their Lord shall reign for ever.” Wisd. iii. 6. For “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when *he hath been proved*, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him.” Jam. i. 12.

(2.) To give them an opportunity of discharging the debt of temporal punishment, which they owe to the divine justice, before they leave this world, that so after their death they may the sooner be admitted into eternal rest. Few, very few indeed, are to be found who being come to the years of discretion have preserved their baptismal innocence; and who is there, even among the greatest saints who have not in some things offended God? Alas “In many things, *says an apostle*, we offend all. Jam. iii. 2. Now our holy faith assures us, that every sin deserves punishment, and will be punished by the divine justice, either here or

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or hereafter ; for Christ himself declares, " that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it, at the day of judgement." Mat. xii. 36. For this reason our saviour exhorts us by penitential works while we are in this life to satisfy our adversary, the divine justice, for this debt ; lest if it be not discharged when death comes, we be thrown into the dismal prison of purgatory, out of which, says he, " thou shalt not go till thou pay the last farthing." Matth. v. 25. But as our self love is exceedingly averse to all sufferings, and too much draws us back from discounting this debt by voluntary penitential works, therefore our good God, of his infinite mercy, desirous to bring his faithful servants, as soon as possible after death to the possession of his kingdom, sends many trials and afflictions upon them, which they receiving in a penitential spirit, and in full conformity to his blessed will, discharges, if not the whole, at least a great portion of that debt which stands against them ; Thus the poor beggar Lazarus, after a life of great tribulation and affliction, having fully paid this debt, at his death, his blessed soul was received by angels and carried by them to Abraham's bosom, a place of rest and peace, where he waited with the other saints for the redemption of Israel. Now this also is a great comfort and support to the faithful servants of God under their afflictions, and encourages them to bear them with great peace of mind yea even with joy, well knowing that all they can endure here is nothing to the torments of that prison, out of which indeed they shall be saved at last *yet so as by fire.* 1. Cor. iii. 15. and not till they have *paid the utmost farthing.*

(3.) *To purify their soul*, by breaking those secret attachments they have to themselves and to creatures, and by that means perfecting them more and more in the pure and holy love of God. Our good Lord has declared in his holy scripture that " his delight is to be with the children of men." Prov. viii. 31. and nothing hinders him from communicating himself to them in the most abundant manner, but the unhappy

attachment they have to themselves and the creatures, which shuts the door of their heart to the divine communications of the spirit of God: Hence our blessed Saviour declares that we must *deny ourselves* and *renounce all that we possess* in order to be his true disciples and worthy of him, that is, of being united to him by holy love. Now even in the faithful servants of God, there are many secret ties and attachments which escape their own notice! yea, which even gild themselves over with the appearance of virtue and sanctity. In which cases, God, who sees these ties as they are in themselves, and well knows how great a hinderance they are to the advancement of these chosen souls in christian perfection, sends them such afflictions as he sees proper for breaking these attachments; he throws them into the fiery furnace of severe tribulation, but at the same time takes care that this fire have no other effect upon them than what the fiery furnace of Nabuchadonosor had upon the three holy children, that were thrown into it; namely, that it burn and consume all their bonds and set their souls at perfect liberty, but that it do them not the smallest hurt, nor leave so much as the smell of fire upon them; so that like gold in the crucible, it consumes all their rust and renders them more bright, more pure, more holy than ever. Hence S. Paul assures us, that the corrections of our heavenly father are *for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness* Heb. xii. 10. And the wiseman declares that, "The mercy of God is lovely in the time of affliction, and as a cloud of rain in the time of drought" Eccles. xxxv. 26. A pious modern author writes on this subject as follows, by tribulation "The heart is cleansed, not only from sin
 " but also from all other imperfections. What
 " would gold itself be, were it not for the furnace
 " and crucible, where it is refined and purified?
 " without this trial it might remain almost un-
 " distinguished from the common mass of vulgar
 " earth. The fire of tribulation is our crucible, and
 " produces the like effects in our soul, which is
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“ naturally subject to innumerable defects, and of
“ itself incapable of rising to any sublime degree of
“ perfection. Our passions, bad habits, and in
“ particular, our self love, that carries on an unin-
“ terrupted war within us, infects and poisons every
“ action of our life, even the most holy; and, un-
“ der a borrowed appearance of God’s greater glory,
“ works out its own ends and contrivances, can by
“ no other means be kept in subjection and brought
“ into reason. One would think that supernatural
“ lights and spiritual consolations might subdue that
“ innate propensity we have to the pleasures of the
“ world, and disengage our affections from its vanity
“ and allurements; and no doubt they may in some
“ degree; but still they disengage us not from the
“ attachment we have to ourselves. These our in-
“ ternal enemies are rather strengthened and more
“ confirmed in the ascendant they have usurped over
“ the soul, when they find even in these extraordinary
“ marks of the divine favour, their own gain and
“ advantage with more security and less remorse. A
“ complete victory and absolute conquest over them
“ requires still something farther The hard
“ season of affliction and winter of tribulation must
“ come to our assistance and indeed are the only cure
“ and remedy of the evil. Without the aid of this
“ sovereign antidote, our passions, though they may
“ occasionally change their objects, will still continue
“ the same in effect and in their native force and
“ vigour. They divest themselves perhaps of what
“ may appear gross and earthly, but, what is more to
“ be dreaded, retain what is more abstract and
“ spiritual, in other words, what is more dangerous
“ and ruinous.” *Pinam. Cross in its true light.*

(4.) *To improve their souls in the most sublime vir-
tues of meekness, humility, patience, and resignation
to the will of God* Nothing renders a soul more
like to Jesus Christ, or more agreeable in the eyes of
God, than these holy virtues; but it is impossible to
acquire any degree of perfection in them without trials
and

and afflictions; and as God Almighty has decreed that all those who are saved must be *made conformable to the image of his son*. Rom. viii. 29. So he sends such tribulations upon them as may enable them effectually to acquire these holy virtues by which they most resemble him: "Learn of me, *says Jesus Christ himself*, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls." Matt. xi. 29. Hence St. James exhorts us to rejoice in our sufferings on this account, "My brethren, *says he*, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations: knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing." Ja. i. 2. So also St. Paul speaks on this subject, "We glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God: and not only so, but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, trial; and trial, hope; and hope confoundeth not." Rom. v. 2. St. Peter also gives a similar advice saying, "Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat that is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you, but if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice; that when his glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." 1 Pet. iv. 12.

(5.) *To increase their merits here and their crown of glory hereafter.* The measure of our sufferings here is laid down in the holy scripture as the measure of our glory hereafter, provided we suffer *with Christ*; that is, after the manner in which he suffered, with meekness and humility, patience and resignation to the will of our heavenly father. "We are the sons of God, *says St. Paul*, and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ: yet so, if we *suffer with him*, that we may be also glorified with him." Rom. viii. 16. "A faithful saying; for if we be dead with him, we shall live also with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." 2 Tim. ii. 11. "For he that hath brought evils upon you, shall bring you everlasting joy again with your salvation."

vation." Baruch. iv. 29. Now this is a source of incredible joy to the just in all their tribulations; for they well know, "that the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." Rom. viii. 18. Yea, "That our present tribulation which is momentary and light, worketh in us *above measure exceedingly* an eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. iv. 17. For "God has regenerated us . . . unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you . . . wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations: that the trial of your faith, much more precious than gold, which is tried by the fire, may be found into praise and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. i. 4. And our Lord himself exhorts us to rejoice in our tribulations on this account, and pronounces a blessing on them that suffer for his sake. "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all that is evil against you, untruly for my sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." Mat. v. 11. For this reason the apostles, when imprisoned and scourged, "went away rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." Acts v. 41. St. Paul also declares of himself. "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation." 2 Cor. vii. 4.

(6.) *To manifest the glory of God himself*, in either supporting his servants in the midst of their severe trials, or in wonderfully delivering them from them, to their greater advantage even in this world itself. Witness the holy martyrs; the three children thrown into the fiery furnace; Daniel in the lion's den; Job; Tobias; Susannah; the man born blind; the raising of Lazarus from the dead; and numbers of others in whom the mighty power of God was manifested, and his fatherly care of those that serve him, displayed in the most admirable manner, so as to confound

confound his enemies, encourage his friends, and increase their confidence in him. What Christ said of the man born blind, and of Lazarus, is equally applicable to all those other examples; for when, "his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Jo. ix. 2. And when he was told of Lazarus's sickness, he said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the son of God may be glorified by it." Jo. xi. 4. Now the faithful servants of God having a sincere and fervent love for him, nothing gives them greater pleasure than that his glory should be promoted among men, and his divine perfections manifested to the world; and this consideration is a great comfort and support to them under all their afflictions; exciting them to use all their best endeavours to bear them in a truly christian manner, for the honour and glory of his divine majesty, perfectly resigned to his blessed will, to be delivered from them or succumb under them, as shall seem to his divine providence most conducive to that end.

Now these and many other such great truths, have so powerful an effect upon the hearts of those that sincerely love God, that nothing is more common among his saints, than to see them not only joyful and happy under the cross, but even longing for more and greater trials; they know that the cross is the only sure way to the crown, that none shall be crowned but he that has lawfully fought; that this was the road in which Christ himself walked to his eternal glory; nay, that it behoved him to suffer and so to enter into his glory; and that they can have no title to a share of his blessing unless they follow him, who *suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps*; for that the disciple cannot expect to be above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. They know that "whom the Lord loveth, he

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he chastiseth, and scourges every one whom he receiveth," and therefore are afraid that, "if they be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, they be as bastards and not as sons." Heb. xii. 6. And therefore they rejoice when they are under the rod of correction, and are then only afraid when they want it.

Q. II. What then is the result of all these truths?

A. From all these truths it manifestly appears, that such true and real happiness as we are capable of in this world, is only to be found in the service of God, and in keeping his commandments. For (1.) Those who served God are no worse off as to the common miseries of this life than those who serve him not; these miseries are common to all, none are exempted from their share of them. (2.) The miseries of life are sent upon the wicked by Almighty God in his anger as a punishment for their crimes; but they are inflicted on his servants in his mercy, as a fatherly correction for their real good. (3.) Wicked people setting their hearts upon the enjoyments of the world, and placing their happiness in them, are exceedingly miserable when deprived of them and when afflicted by their contrary evils. The servants of God making it their daily endeavours to take off their affections from all worldly objects, and seeking their happiness only in God, feel the loss of these worldly objects with much less trouble, and very soon get their minds reconciled to the want of them. (4.) Wicked people have no resource to fly to for support under the evils that come upon them, but the vain helps of human philosophy, which can never bear up the soul under severe trials; good men have a never failing source of comfort in God, and in submission to his holy will, which preserves their peace of mind and their internal content under the most violent afflictions. (5.) Bad men have no grounds to expect any good from their sufferings which might encourage them under them; good men have so many and so great advantages that flow from their afflictions.

afflictions, that the thought of them fills their hearts even with joy amidst their crosses, and makes them love them, and desire them, and find real happiness in them. What a vast odds is this between the one and the other? and hence the word of God, which as we have seen above, so beautifully describes the happiness of the good, paints out the misery of the wicked in these striking colours. "The wicked man is proud all his days, and the number of the years of his tyranny is uncertain; the sound of dread is always in his ears, and when there is peace, he always suspecteth treason. He believeth not that he may return from darkness to light, looking round about for the sword on every side. When he moveth himself to seek bread, he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. Tribulation shall terrify him, and distress shall surround him, as a king that is prepared for a battle. For he hath stretched out his hand against God, and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty." Job xv. 20. "When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." 1 Thess. v. 3. Shall not the light of the wicked be extinguished, and the flame of his fire not shine? The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and the lamp that is over him shall be put out. The step of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down head-long. The sole of his feet shall be held in a snare, and thirst shall burn against him. A girdle is hid for him in the earth, and his trap upon the path. Fears shall terrify him on every side, and shall entangle his feet." Job xviii. 5. And no wonder, for, "Whoever resisted God and had peace?" Job ix. 4. "The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire. There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God." Is. lvii. 20. For whereas wickedness is fearful, it beareth witness of its condemnation; for a troubled conscience always forcasteth grievous things."

things." Wisd. xvii. 10. and therefore "The wicked man fleeth when no man pursueth; but the just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread." Prov. xxviii. 1.

Q. 12. Are there any other sources of comfort to the just, in their tribulations, besides those above mentioned?

A. There are many others; such as (1.) *reading the holy scriptures*, which are written for our consolation, "for what things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience and the comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope."

Rom. xv. 4. (2.) *Meditating on the passion of Christ*; according to that of St. Paul, "Let us run by patience to the fight that is set before us: looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. For *think diligently* upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds Heb. xii. 1.

(3) *Reading the lives of the saints* of God, from whose glorious examples the soul is greatly animated, and strengthened with great fervour to imitate them.

(4.) *The testimony of a good conscience*, which is a continual feast, and a vast support to the soul in all her afflictions, especially in such as come upon her for God's sake, "For this is thanks worthy, if for conscience sake a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if committing sin and being buffeted for it, you endure? But if doing well you suffer patiently, this is thanks-worthy before God: for unto this you are called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." 1 Pet. ii. 19. Nay, "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be happy: for that which is of the honour, glory and power of God, and that which is his spirit resteth upon you." 1 Pet. iv. 14. Hence St. Paul makes a good conscience a subject of glory, "For our glory

is this, *says he*, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity of heart and sincerity of God, and not in carnal wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conversed in this world." 2 Cor. i. 12. A good conscience is a source of great confidence in God, that he will hear our prayers, for "If our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God; and whatever we shall ask, we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." 1 Jo. i. 21. and therefore St. Paul, warmly exhorts us not to lose this ground of confidence, "Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*; and our bodies washed with clean water; let us hold fast the confession of our hope, without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promised." Heb. x. 22. (5.) *The consolation of the holy sacraments*, where grace and strength is bestowed upon the soul, according to her capacity of receiving it, to sweeten her troubles and make them light and easy to her. (6.) The advice and consolations of spiritual guides, which is of immense assistance to calm the soul, and put her upon the proper manner of behaving under the cross, so as to draw the intended benefit from it. With many more of the like efficacy but especially (7.) *The internal consolations of the Holy Ghost*, which our good God never fails to bestow upon his faithful servants amidst their trials and crosses, which they endure in conformity to his holy will. David was very sensible of this when he said, "In the day of my trouble I sought God, with my hands lifted up to him in the night, and I was not deceived. My soul refused to be comforted; I remembered God and was delighted." Psa. lxxvi. 3. St. Paul also strongly declares this, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we also may be able to comfort them who are in any distress . . . for as you are partakers of the sufferings

sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation."

2 Cor. i. 3. 7. And this heavenly consolation God bestows with a liberal hand; and the more abundantly, the more our sufferings are; for, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us; so also by Christ doth our comfort abound." 2 Cor. i. 5. Hence

David acknowledges this from his own experience, saying, "We are filled, O Lord, in the morning with thy mercy; and we have rejoiced and are delighted all our days; we have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us; for the years in which we have seen evils." Psa. lxxxix. 14. St. Paul in like manner says, "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation." 2 Cor. vii. 4. And he assures us, that it is a consolation which will last for ever, "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God and our Father, hath loved us and given us an everlasting consolation, and good hope in grace." 2 Thes. ii. 15. See then in all these things what engaging happiness, what amazing advantages the true servants of God enjoy even in this life, and with how much reason our blessed Saviour invites us to his service from this very consideration, saying, "*Come to me*, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and *I will refresh you*; Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and *you shall find rest to your souls*; for my yoke is *sweet* and my burden *light*." Matt. xi. 28. How much then is it our interest to serve our good God faithfully, and to keep his holy commandments, seeing our real happiness even in this life so essentially depends upon it; and much more, when we reflect that there is no other possible way of attaining to eternal happiness in the life to come? Which we shall now consider.

C H A P. V.

Of Eternal Salvation, the last End of Man.

Q. 1. **W**HAT are we to consider about eternal salvation ?

A. We have already seen in the introduction, that obedience to the commands of God is a condition absolutely necessary for obtaining eternal salvation ; but as that would be but a weak motive to make us obey them, unless we are thoroughly persuaded of the importance of salvation, and how immensely it concerns us to obtain it, therefore we are now to consider our eternal salvation itself, its excellency and importance ; and from that to learn how much it is our only true and real interest in the next life, to serve God here, and to keep his commandments, seeing our eternal happiness which is our last end, depends entirely upon our doing so.

Q. 2. How is eternal happiness the last end of man ?

A. We have seen above that the end for which God created us, was to glorify him by loving and serving him ; this is the immediate end for which we have our being, and for which we are placed in this world. All the creatures around us are created for our use, and serve to display to us, the infinite power, wisdom and goodness of our great creator, with his other divine perfections ; and the wonderful things he has done for us, still more fully discover to us these his sublime excellencies, and convince us in the most amiable and endearing manner how lovely he is, and how much he deserves to be loved and praised, and glorified by us continually. But his design in creating us does not stop here ; he made us not for this present life alone, but for eternity ; when this transitory life ends, we begin another life which shall continue

Chap. V. Of Eternal Salvation, &c. 163

tinue for ever; and such is his infinite goodness for us, that he has ordained, that if we faithfully comply with the end of our being in this life, by serving and glorifying him here, we shall be rewarded hereafter with eternal salvation, which is the possession of an incomprehensible happiness in the enjoyment of God himself for all eternity; and therefore this salvation of our souls is called our last end, as being the last end which God had in view *with regard to us*, in creating us; "You have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, everlasting life." Romans vi. 22.

Q. 3. Why do you say, *with regard to us*?

A. Because the scripture says, "The Lord hath made all things for himself." Prov. xvi. 4. and "Every one that calleth upon my name, *saieth God*, I have created him for my glory." Isa. xliii. 7. Which shows that the supreme and ultimate end which God had in creating us was *his own glory*; so that not only in his life are we bound to glorify God as the immediate end of our being, but this also shall be the happy employment of the blessed in the life to come for all eternity; now this glory of God in the next life, consists principally in manifesting to the blessed, to their unspeakable delight, the riches and treasures of his infinite goodness, which takes pleasure in making his faithful servants completely happy; so that the last end which God had in view in creating us, was *in regard to himself*, his own eternal glory, and *in regard to us* our eternal *happiness*, and these two are so connected together, that our eternal happiness essentially consists in seeing God and in loving, enjoying, and glorifying him for ever.

§ 1. Of our Happiness in seeing God, as our last End.

Q. 4. Why does our happiness consist in seeing God?

A.

A. Upon account of his infinite beauty and numberless perfections. We find from experience, that our nature is so framed by our great creator, as to receive a particular pleasure and delight from looking upon any object which is perfect in its kind and beautiful. And as the beauty of the human frame is the most excellent of any material beauty, especially when accompanied with elegance of person, and graceful dignity; so we find, that when it is very great and singular in any one, it has a most incredible power of attracting to itself the hearts of those who behold it, even of the most wise and powerful; so as, in a manner, to bewitch them and enchant them, from the pleasure they receive in beholding and enjoying it; witness the examples of Sampson, and Solomon, of Holophernes and numberless others. Now if created bodily beauty, which is a mere nothing even to the spiritual beauty of the soul, and still less to the supernatural beauty of a being in glory, has such attracting charms to please and delight the hearts of those who behold it; how much more must the infinite uncreated beauty of God, which shines forth in all his divine perfections, totally beatify the souls of the blessed, and fill them with the most inconceivable rapture and delight? Our souls and hearts are made for God; no creature whatsoever is capable to satisfy their boundless capacity; nothing but an infinite good can fill them; nothing but the clear sight and possession of the beauty of God, which is this infinite good for which they were created, can give them entire content.

Q. 5. Can we form any just idea of what the beauty of God is in itself?

A. That is impossible; for how can a finite being form any just idea of what is infinite? how can the creature have any adequate idea of what essentially belongs to the creator? Besides we have no grounds to go upon, which can help us to form any proper idea of the beauty of God, more than a blind man has to form any just idea of light and colour. The beauty
of

of God is of a kind totally different from all created beauty ; and though all created beauty is from God, and therefore must be in him ; yet it is in him after a manner so very different from what it is in creatures, and with such infinite perfection, that there is no possibility of forming any just idea of what the beauty of God is in itself, from what we see in the creatures. But there are not wanting several strong reasons which show us in the most convincing manner, how great, how amazing, how infinitely delightful the beauty of God must be ; and these reasons are chiefly what follows :

(1.) The scripture declares, that God is the *first author of beauty*, and from that draws this conclusion, if men be delighted with the beauty of the creatures, " Let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they. For the first author of beauty made all those things." Wisd. xiii. 3. And a little after adds, " By the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby." ver. 5. And this is a most just argument, for the creator must have in himself what he communicates to his creatures, and in a degree as much more perfect and excellent than they, in as much as he is infinitely more perfect and excellent than they are ; and hence, if all the numberless beauties which we see dispersed among all the creatures in the universe, the splendour of the sun, the brightness of the moon, the sparkling of the stars, the lively colours of the rainbow, the immense variety of beauties which we see in the flowers, and in all the productions of the earth, in birds and beasts, and all living creatures, were all collected in one, and to all this were added, all the beauty that ever existed in the human form ; though nothing can be conceived so delightful and enchanting as this would be, yet all this if compared to the uncreated beauty of God, would not bear such a proportion to it, as a small spark of fire bears to the sun, or a drop of water to the ocean. Nay, what is still more ; almighty

mighty God not only is the author of all the beauty that is found in all creatures which actually do exist; but can, if he pleases, create numbers of other worlds and of other creatures, as much, and much more amply, exceeding the beauties of this universe, than this universe itself exceeds a grain of sand; and consequently he must contain in himself all possible beauty, without bounds or limitation, in presence of which all the beauties of this world, and of thousands of worlds more perfect than this, would totally disappear as a mere nothing; just as the stars disappear in the presence of the sun. Hence the scripture says, "the moon shall blush and the sun shall be ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Sion, and shall be glorified in the sight of his antients." Is. xxiv. 23. What an amazing idea does this give us of the immensity of that divine beauty, and of the charms and delights which the sight and enjoyment of it must communicate to the souls of those who behold it!

(2.) The second argument is taken from the properties of the divine beauty, which give it another infinite advantage over all created beauty. Now these are (1.) That it is altogether *unchangeable*, so that it is absolutely impossible it should ever fail, or even be in the smallest degree diminished. Oh how frail and fading is all created beauty! take that of the human form, which is the greatest and the most engaging beauty we know among the creatures; how soon does a fit of sickness change the most comely countenance into an object of horror? how does the short space of a few years deprive it of all its charms! its colour fades, its lustre disappears, its liveliness decays, and as old age approaches and defiles it with wrinkles, it can scarce be known for what it was! Death at last puts the finishing stroke to its existence, and makes the most beautiful countenance even loathsome to behold! What then is the beauty of man? A falling star, a fleeting meteor, a theatre of inconstancy, the toy of time, the delusion of the eyes, a shining frailty! Not so, the increated beauty of the great

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great creator; he is beauty itself, and his divine beauty is essential, perpetual, invariable, unchangeable, eternal! No accident can lessen it, no length of time can diminish it; and the happy soul who is once in possession of it, shall never, never be deprived of the inexpressible bliss she enjoys in contemplating it.

(2) The beauty of God, is *entire, perfect, pure beauty*, without the smallest mixture of deformity or imperfection. Consider the most beautiful being that

ever appeared in the world; how far is its beauty from being complete even in its own kind? with how many defects is it accompanied, either in the proportion of the parts, or in the propriety of the colour, or in the elegance and air of the person? and what innumerable other beauties are wanting to it? and after all it is only superficial, it is all external, and within that outward appearance, what a mass of corruption does it contain! But the beauty of God is an aggregate of all possible beauty, in an infinite degree, without the smallest defect; every thing there is charming, every thing delightful, every thing enchanting, every thing lovely; so that it is no less impossible to add any thing to its perfection, than it is to diminish it! (3.) It is *superabundant*, and so amazingly so, that though it be communicated in different degrees to innumerable creatures, yet this is done without the smallest diminution of its own infinite perfection! Nay, it is so immensely communicative that it transforms into its own likeness those happy souls who are admitted to its presence, merely by being seen by them, for, "We all *beholding* the glory of the Lord with open face, *says St. Paul*, are transformed into the same image." 2 Cor. iii. 18.

And, "We know, *cries the beloved disciple*, that when he shall appear, we shall *be like to him*, because *we shall see him as he is*." 1 Jo. iii. 2. If therefore, the fading, corruptible, imperfect beauty of the creatures has such a powerful effect upon our hearts, and gives us such pleasure in beholding it, conceive if you can, what amazing effect it must produce, what infinite

finite delight it must give, to see and possess this uncreated, immense, essential, eternal beauty of the great creator !

(3) The third reason to show how great this beauty of God must be, is taken from the effects it produces on those who behold it ; and these are two, incomprehensible pleasure, and unbounded love. Pleasure and love are indeed the constant and natural effects of beauty ; it always gives a pleasure and delight to the heart of man to look upon a beautiful object ; and it naturally draws our good will and affection towards it, as constant experience shows ; by which we also learn, that the more beautiful the object is, the more powerfully does it produce these effects in our souls. Nothing therefore serves more to show us how immense the divine beauty must be, than to consider how powerfully, and to what an amazing degree it delights the soul of those who behold it, and how vehemently it draws to itself all their love and affections.

Q. 6. How greatly does the clear vision of God delight the soul ?

A. On this we must observe (1.) That the pleasure and delight which the soul enjoys from the beatific vision of God, is beyond all explication ; yea, beyond all conception ; for “ From the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears ; the eye hath not seen, O God, besides thee, what things thou has prepared for them that wait for thee.” Is. lxiv. 4 or, as St. Paul expresseth it, “ The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.” 1 Cor. ii. 9. And therefore the royal prophet cries out with astonishment, “ O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which *thou hast hidden* for them that fear thee ! which thou hast wrought for them that hope in thee !” Ps. xxx. 20. and St. Paul also assures us, that “ the peace of God surpasseth all understanding.” Philip. iv. 7. So that the supreme

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preme delight and joy which flows from contemplating the infinite beauty of God, not only exceeds all the pleasures and delights of this world, but by its ineffable and excessive sweetness, immensely surpasses all that we can possibly conceive or imagine.

(2. We are told by St. Paul, that "he was caught up to the third heavens . . . that he was caught up into paradise, and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter." 2 Cor. xii. 2. 4. he does not say that he was admitted to the clear vision of God, he was still in his mortal state, in which the scripture tells us, that "no man can see God and live;" and yet the beauties he saw and heard on that occasion were so astonishing and delightful, that he was quite enraptured with them, and declares, and repeats it a second time, that he did not know whether he was in the body or not, "Whether in the body, *says he*, I know not, or out of the body I know not, God know th." ver. 2. Now if the glimpse he there had of the divine beauty was so delightful, as to deprive him of his very senses, what must it be to see God face to face, in all the effulgence of his glory? In like manner when our Saviour showed his three beloved disciples a glimpse of his body in glory, when he was transfigured before them, they were so confounded and amazed and out of themselves, that they knew not what they said: what must it be to see him at the right hand of his Father? and if the human nature of Christ in glory be so delightful an object, and so enraptures the soul, what must be the infinite, increated beauty of the deity?

[3.] Our blessed Saviour says to the good servant "well done thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; *enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* Mat. xxv. 21. On which words a pious writer says as follows "He first honours the faithful servant commending him for his fidelity; then he enriches him, delivering many things into his hand, and
so

“ so admits him into the joy and pleasure of his
 “ Lord : signifying by this manner of expression the
 “ greatness of this joy ; for he does not say that this
 “ joy should enter into him, but that he should enter
 “ into joy. So great is this joy, that it wholly fills
 “ and embraces the blessed souls which enter into
 “ heaven, as into an immense ocean of pleasure and
 “ delight. The joys of the earth enter into the
 “ hearts of those who possess them, but fill them
 “ not, because the capacity of man’s heart is greater
 “ than they can satisfy. But the joys of heaven re-
 “ ceive the blessed into themselves and fill and over-
 “ flow them on all parts. Their joy is like an ocean
 “ of delights, into which the saints enter as a sponge
 “ into the sea, which filling its whole capacity, the
 “ water surrounds and encompasses it all about.
 “ Hence joy shall be within, and joy without, joy
 “ above and below, joy round about on every side,
 “ and all parts full of joy.” *Differ between temp. and*
Etern. B. iv. ch. 4. On this account the royal
 prophet compares this immensity of joy to a torrent
 which quite inebriates the soul “ O how hast thou
 multiplied thy mercy, O Lord . . . they shall be in-
 ebriated with the plenty of thy house, thou shalt make
 them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure, for in thee
 is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see
 light.” Ps. xxxv. 8. and he declares again and again
 that this joy is so great that it perfectly fills and satiates
 the boundless capacity of the soul. “ Thou hast
 made known to me the ways of life, thou shalt fill me
 with joy with thy countenance, at thy right hand are
 delights even to the end.” Ps. xv. 11. “ I will ap-
 pear before thy sight in justice, I shall be satisfied
 when thy glory shall appear.” Ps. xvi. 15. “ Blessed
 is he whom thou hast chosen and taken to thee ; he
 shall dwell in thy courts ; we shall be filled with the
 good things of thy house.” Ps. lxiv. 5. And no
 wonder, for,

(4.) The joy which flows from the sight of God,
 is no other than the joy of God himself ; “ enter thou
 into

into the joy of thy Lord says our Saviour. That joy which God is, and by which he is essentially and eternally happy, is the joy which he communicates to his saints, by showing to them his infinite beauty. "I am thy reward, *says he to Abraham*, exceeding great." Gen. xv. 1. "I am thy salvation." Ps. xxxiv. 3. God is a being infinitely great, infinite in all possible perfections, and the enjoyment of his infinite beauty, which shines forth in all his divine perfections, is so exquisitely delightful as to render God himself completely and infinitely happy for ever. Now this infinite happiness, this exquisite joy, which God possesses in himself, is what he communicates to his saints when they are admitted to his divine presence: for he does not say simply *enter into joy*, but to show the immensity of that joy, he says, *enter into the joy of thy Lord*, into that joy which God himself possesses and which renders him infinitely happy. Consequently the joy of the saints from the beatifical vision of the divine beauty, must needs be infinite and unutterable, and all the pleasures of this world in comparison of it, are nothing but bitterness, like gall or wormwood. Yea so immense and incomprehensible is their joy, that thousands of years pass away like a day, and each day gives them the joy of thousands of years; and this St. Peter desires us particularly to observe, as what gives us one of the most sublime ideas of the greatness of their bliss; "Be not ignorant, my beloved, *says he*, that one day *with the Lord*, is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." 2. Pet. iii. 8. David also assures us that "a thousand years in the sight of God are but as yesterday, which is past and gone." Ps. lxxxix. 4. and therefore says that "Better is one day in his courts above thousands." Ps. lxxxiii. 11. What a wonderful idea does this give us of the amazing delight which flows from the enjoyment of God!

(5.) What serves still more to show the greatness of this bliss, is, that though all the powers of the soul shall be perfectly satisfied in the possession of it,

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although

although the whole man shall be satiated with the most exquisite delight, and although this delight shall continue without a moment's interruption for all eternity; yet the soul shall never weary of it, never become tired in the enjoyment of it; never can loathe it, or be cloyed with it: But as she finds in the divine beauty an inexhaustible treasure of perfections, of wonders, of truths, of graces, she is so totally overwhelmed with the ineffable joy she perceives in beholding it, that for all eternity she shall never be able to turn her thoughts, no not for a single moment, from contemplating the lovely object which causes it; and her delight shall continue to be as full, as entire, as intense, through all eternity itself, as it was the first moment she entered into the possession of it. Oh how immensely different is this from the beggarly pleasures of this world, the most exquisite of which cannot be enjoyed for but a short time without creating the most sensible disgust and loathing.

(6.) Lastly, this heavenly delight which flows from the vision of God, is so strong and powerful, as utterly to exclude all possible evil, all pain, all grief; nay it is able to convert even hell itself into a paradise; for as the pain of loss, or the being deprived of the enjoyment of God is properly what makes hell to be hell; so should God be pleased to show himself in his beauty to the devils and damned souls, that delightful sight would, in an instant, extinguish all their other torments and fill them with joy inexpressible. Oh how potent a joy must that be which cast into an abyss of miseries, converts them all into consolations! Even in the small communication with God which a soul in her mortal state is capable of receiving, we see what wonderful effects of this kind it can produce; how many of the martyrs, in the midst of the most exquisite torments which the rage of hell and the malice of men could invent against them, were insensible of what they suffered in the body, nay were even "filled with comfort, like Saint Paul, and exceedingly abounded with joy in their tribulations." 2.

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Cor. vii. 4. from that internal communication which God gave them of himself? how much more then must all pain, grief, and evil, be for ever excluded from that happy place where God reveals himself, face to face, to his saints, and shows them in the clear vision of himself, the incomprehensible beauty of all his divine perfections? Hence the scripture gives us a beautiful description of this singular effect of the divine presence, “*They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their forehead, and night shall be no more; and they shall not need the light of the lamp nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever.*” Rev. xxii. 4. “*They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them nor any heat, for the lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall lead them to the living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*” Rev. vii. 16. “*They shall be his people, and God himself with them, shall be their God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away.*” Rev. xxi. 3. “*The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Sion with praise; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning shall fly away.*” Is. xxxv. 9. “*O great, O bounteous God, who can*”
 “*conceive the riches of thy glory, which thou shalt*”
 “*communicate to thy holy servants in thy kingdom?*”
 “*When all clouds shall be dispelled, when the curtain*”
 “*shall be drawn, when we shall see thee as thou art,*”
 “*what infinite joy shall fill our happy souls? What*”
 “*torrents of pleasure shall we then enjoy, when thou*”
 “*shalt display to us all thy treasures, when all thy*”
 “*beauties shall appear to us in their brightest colours,*”
 “*when our eyes shall be struck with the splendour of*”
 “*all thy divine perfections? What heartfelt pleasure*”
 “*will it be, to contemplate thy immense, eternal,*”
 “*incomprehensible being, the source and fountain*”
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“ of all being, and from which all creatures flow ?
 “ What inexpressible joy, to see in thee all manner
 “ of truths, and all the wonderful ways of thy divine
 “ providence ? What inconceivable delight to pene-
 “ trate into the secrets of thy heart, and there discover
 “ the endearing love and tender regard thou hast had
 “ for us, from all eternity ? O how does the soul
 “ melt away in amazement at the thought of these
 “ joys ? O how poor and worthless does all this
 “ world appear when compared with them ?” Such
 then is the excellency of eternal salvation ! Such the
 great end for which we were created !

Q. 7. How does the beauty of God excite the love, and draw to himself the affections of those who behold him ?

A. As the sight of the infinite beauty of God, gives an inconceivable delight to those who are admitted to it, so it must necessarily excite in their hearts a love and affection towards him, proportionable to that excessive joy which they receive from beholding it ; and consequently in a degree and manner, altogether above any thing we can conceive, or have any idea of, from the experience of what we feel in ourselves towards any created beauty. Now this difference chiefly takes place in two things. (1.) Because it deprives the will entirely of its liberty ; the moment the soul beholds the beauty of the divine presence, that instant she is forcibly drawn towards it with the most violent affections. Such are the excessive charms she perceives in it, that it is no more in her power to restrain her affection from it : for as it is impossible for a thread of dry flax when put into the fire not to catch the flame, and be immediately set on fire itself, so it is much more impossible for the heart of man, when admitted to the presence of God, not to be immediately set on fire with the most ardent love and affection for him ; and as it is impossible for a stone, when let fall from a height, not to be drawn down with great violence towards the earth ; so it is much more impossible for the soul of man, in sight of the divine

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divine beauty of God, not to be drawn towards him with the most delightful, but irresistible violence of holy love. Happy necessity indeed, which inseparably joins us to the source of all happiness ! Happy union of love which endless eternities shall never be able to disjoin ! (2.) The divine beauty not only draws the soul to itself with such irresistible charms of love, but it also occupies the whole affections of the heart ; so that the happy soul is not only necessitated to love God, but it is impossible for her to love any thing else but God, or with relation to God ; and therefore she can no more love either herself or any creature ; but only in God and for God, with perfect subordination to her love for him ; whatever beauty or excellency she perceives in any creature, she sees the same excellency, but infinitely more perfect in God ; whatever pleasure she can receive from them, she receives an infinitely greater pleasure in him : her whole delight then is in God, her whole affections are fixed in him ; her joy is to please him ; her most sublime happiness is to do his will ; her delightful employment to contemplate his infinite beauty and all his divine perfections, and to praise and magnify and adore him for ever, singing with inef-
fable consolation, “ Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour and power, and strength, to our God for ever and ever, Amen.”
Rev. vii. 9.

§ 2. *Of the Excellency of our last End.*

Q. 8. How great is the excellency or value of our last end ?

A. What we have already seen, serves to give us the most sublime idea of the excellency of this glorious end for which we are created. For what can we conceive more exalted, more honourable, more glorious, than to be united with the great God by holy love, to be ever in his presence, to be enraptured with infinite delight in possessing him, to be ho-
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noured as his intimate friends, and dear children, to be transformed into the image of his glory, and to be unchangeably fixed in the possession of that supreme good for ever and ever? However as there are several other considerations which serve to convince us still more and more of the invaluable excellency of our salvation, we shall here briefly take a view of them, and,

(1.) From the exalted light in which the scripture every where represents it to us. Thus (1.) our Saviour says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth *all that he hath*, and buyeth that field. Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls; who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold *all that he had* and bought it." Mat. xiii. 44. In both these similitudes Jesus Christ himself shows us, of what infinite value our salvation is, and how richly it deserves to be purchased even though we should part with *every thing else* to procure it; for indeed it is above all value, nothing in this world can be comparable to it. (2.) It is every where proposed to us in the scripture as a kingdom, which is an object of the highest excellency of any thing that men esteem upon earth; but it is a kingdom infinitely preferable to the whole world, in the immense riches it contains, in the exalted glory and honour that accompanies the possession of it, and in the ineffable pleasures which it affords to those who obtain it. The royal prophet thus describes the excellencies of this heavenly kingdom, "In thy strength, O Lord, the king shall joy, and in thy salvation he shall rejoice exceedingly; Thou hast given him *his heart's desire*, and hast not withholden from him the will of his lips; for thou hast prevented him with *blessings of sweetness*; thou hast set on his head a *crown of precious stones*; he asked life of thee and thou hast given him *length of days for ever and ever*. His glory is great in thy salvation;

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salvation ; glory and *great beauty shalt thou lay upon him* ; for thou shalt give him to be a blessing for ever and ever : thou shalt make him joyful in gladness *with thy countenance.*" Psa. xx. 1. (3.) " Blessed are those servants, *says Jesus Christ*, whom the Lord, when he cometh shall find watching ; Amen, I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister to them."

Luke xii. 37. What an inconceivable idea does this expression of the Son of God give us, of the great dignity and honour which he will bestow on his faithful servants, in his kingdom ! That he himself will become, in a manner, their servant, he will make them sit down to feast at the delicious banquet of his table, and he himself will serve them ! (4.) " He that shall overcome and keep my works unto the end, I will give him *power over the nations . . .* as I also have received of my father : and I will give him *the morning star.*" Rev. ii. 26. " He that shall overcome, shall be *clothed in white garments . . .* and I will *confess his name* before my father and before his angels He that shall overcome, I will make him *a pillar in the temple of my God* ; and he shall go out no more, and I will write upon him the *name of my God*, . . . and *my new name . . .* To him that shall overcome, I will give *to sit with me in my throne*, as I also have overcome and am set down with my father in his throne." Rev. iii. 5. 12. 21. Consider each of these expressions and see what an exalted idea they give us of the great dignity and excellency of our eternal salvation.

(2) This is further shown from the extraordinary means which Almighty God has used, and daily uses for procuring the salvation of his elect. For who could ever imagine that he would so wonderfully exert his Almighty power, and employ the sovereign dominion he has over all the creation to procure that, if it were not an object of the highest excellency in his eyes, and worthy of all that he does to obtain it ? On this then we must observe, (1.) That the
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creation of this world, and all the wonderful ways the divine providence takes in preserving and governing it, is all intended for the salvation of souls, as the great end the creator has in view in its existence. All the inferior creatures are intended for the use and benefit of man, to display to him the wisdom, power, goodness and other perfections of the creator, and thus serve as motives, means, or instruments by which he may be excited and enabled to know, love, and glorify his God, and by so doing save his own soul.

(2.) In consequence of this, all the inferior creatures must end with time, and at the last day, when "the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burnt up." 2 Pet. iii.

10. When all these creatures which have their being on the earth for the use of man, shall be no more, because man shall be no more upon the earth to use them, man himself shall still subsist in another life which shall last for all eternity. And as the duration of the world will continue only till the number of the elect be fulfilled; consequently the salvation of the elect is the great end which God has in view in the creation, preservation, and government of the world. Hence (3.) Though the general conduct of providence in what passes here below, is in a great measure concealed from our eyes under the vail of second causes, yet it is most certain that nothing happens upon the face of the earth, but what has a relation to the salvation of the elect; the œconomy of nature is of an inferior order to that of grace, and is created to be subservient to it, and it is just that all temporal things should be subservient to those that are eternal; this visible world is made only for one that is invisible, and the sovereign Lord of all disposes of, and regulates all that passes in the one, only to serve as a foundation on which to establish the other; that continual chain of events which happen in life; those innumerable incidents that fall out in the world, are

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all regulated by the hidden springs of the divine providence, according to the secret relation they bear to the salvation of souls, "for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, unto heavenly glory." 2 Tim. ii. 10. As St. Paul expresses it on another occasion; "for all things, *says the same apostle*, are for your sakes, that the grace abounding through many, may abound in thanksgiving to the glory of God." 2 Cor. iv. 15. Nay our Saviour himself assures us, that towards the latter end for their sake, he will shorten the duration of time, and put a more speedy stop to the existence of the world; "unless the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh should be saved; but for the sake of the elect, which he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." Mark xiii. 20. What wonderful things did God do in all parts of the creation, in the heavens, in the earth, in the seas and rivers in order to bring his chosen people out of Egypt, and place them in the earthly Canaan, the land of promise; all these things, as St. Paul assures us, 1 Cor. x. 6. were done in a figure of us, to show the œconomy of the divine providence in what he does to bring his elect from the Egypt of sin and from the bondage of Satan; and place them in the heavenly Canaan, the true land of promise. But how exalted an idea does all this give us of the great value and excellency of the salvation of souls, when we see the almighty using such wonderful means to procure it; and making all the rest of the creation subservient to it? Nothing is of any value in the sight of God but the affair of salvation; every thing else in comparison of it, is with him an object of contempt. The rise or desolation of empires, the establishment or destruction of kingdoms, the humiliation of the powers of the earth, and all temporal events whatsoever, are of no real value before God, are a matter of mere indifference to him, but in as far as they are connected with, or have a relation to the salvation of souls. How great then must the value of souls be in his sight! how precious before

before him their eternal salvation! (4.) But it is a small matter in the judgment of God, to make the material creation subservient to the salvation of souls; it is of itself so insignificant, that it could have little or no value, but from its relation to that great end. He goes further, he employs even those sublime spirits, his holy angels, who always see his face in glory, and are the most perfect of all his creatures, in order to procure our salvation; "They are all ministering spirits, *as St. Paul assures us*, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation." Heb. i. 14. to *minister*, that is to serve them, to have the charge of them, to encamp round about them and defend them, and to assist them in securing that great and important end of their being, *their eternal salvation!* Can we imagine that God would employ these sublime beings on such a service, or that they would undertake it with such cheerfulness and execute it with such care and fidelity as they do, if it were not in his and their esteem an object worthy of so much attention? (5.) But after all, what are all these means used by God to procure the salvation of souls, in comparison with what Jesus Christ, the Son God, has done and suffered for that purpose? When we reflect, that God is a being of infinite perfections, and wholly independent of any other; that he possesses in himself alone such a plenitude of essential happiness, such an infinite bliss, that it is absolutely impossible for it ever to receive either the smallest increase even from the salvation of all the posterity of Adam, or the smallest diminution from the eternal perdition of the whole; that if he pleases, he can create innumerable worlds, and of other creatures, to serve him and obey him in whatever he chooses to command; in a word, that he has not the smallest need of us in one way or other, that we can be of no real use to him, and when we have done all that we are commanded, we must acknowledge that *we are unprofitable servants*; when we consider this, and then behold this great being, when

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we had ruined ourselves by our own fault, humbling himself, taking upon him the form of man, *in the likeness of sinful flesh*. Rom. viii. and after suffering the most cruel and ignominious torments, at last dying in a disgraceful manner upon a cross, for no other end but to save our poor souls and bring them to eternal salvation; we are confounded! we are lost in amazement! think what we please, we shall never be able to fathom this incomprehensible mystery; but will be forced to conclude that the salvation of souls must be a valuable object indeed, since the eternal wisdom of the Father, thought it worth his while to use such extraordinary means to procure it.

(3.) Another thing which shows beyond reply, the immense value and excellency of salvation, is, that it is eternal; in which respect the greatest and most esteemed things of this world, disappear in its presence as smoke before the wind. And indeed what weight or value can any human affair have in the heart of a thinking man, when he reflects that it must all soon come to an end? how vain and ridiculous do all the toils and labours of men appear, even in those affairs which seem to them of the highest importance, when we reflect how soon their greatest achievements and most renowned performances are brought to nothing? what labours, what toils, what dangers, what expence of blood and treasure did it not cost an Alexander, a Cæsar, and other such worldly heroes, to conquer kingdoms and establish empires? and yet how short was the time that they enjoyed the fruits of their labours? how soon after their death were the conquests lost, and their very countries themselves sunk in obscurity? nothing appears more reasonable, or of greater consequence in the eyes of worldly people, than to spend their time and labour in bettering their fortunes, raising their family, and laying up treasures for their children. But how often are they disappointed in their views, notwithstanding all their endeavours? and if they do

do succeed, how long does it last? scarce a generation passeth, when their posterity, either by their own folly, or unforeseen accidents, are reduced to poverty, to misery, and obscurity. How beautifully does Solomon describe this vanity of all temporal things throughout the whole book of Ecclesiastes; "Vanity of vanities, *says he*, and all is vanity. What hath a man more of all his labour that he taketh under the sun? . . . the eye is not filled with seeing, neither is the ear filled with hearing . . . There is no remembrance of former things; nor indeed of those things, which hereafter are to come, shall there be any remembrance with them that shall be in the latter end . . . I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Ch. i. "I said in my heart; I will go and abound with delights, and enjoy good things . . . and when I turned myself to all the works which my hand had wrought, and to the labours, wherein I had laboured in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of spirit, and that *nothing was lasting under the sun* . . . again, I hated all application wherewith I had earnestly laboured under the sun, being like to have an heir after me, whom I know not whether he shall be a wise man or a fool, and he shall have rule over all my labours, with which I have laboured and been solicitous: and is there any thing so vain? . . . For what profit shall a man have of all his labour and vexation of spirit, with which he hath been tormented under the sun? all his days are full of sorrows and miseries, even in the night he doth not rest in mind: and is not this vanity? . . . to the sinner God hath given vexation and superfluous care to keep up and to gather together, and to give it to him that hath pleased God, but this also is vanity and a fruitless solicitude of the mind" Ch. ii. "The death of man and the death of beasts is one, and the condition of them both is equal; as man dieth so they also die: all things breath alike, and man hath nothing more than beast (*as to the life of the body*)

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all things are subject to vanity. And all things go to one place: of earth they were made, and unto earth they return together." Ch. iii. "Again I considered all the labours of men, and I remarked that their industries are exposed to the envy of their neighbours; so in this also there is vanity and fruitless care. . . . There is but one, and he hath not a second, no child, no brother, and yet he ceaseth not to labour, neither are his eyes satisfied with riches, neither doth he reflect, saying, For whom do I labour and defraud my soul of good things? in this also is vanity and a grievous vexation." Ch. iv. "Where there are great riches, there are also many to eat them. And what doth it profit the owner, but that he seeth the riches with his eyes? . . . There is also another grievous evil, which I have seen under the sun; riches kept to the hurt of the owner: for they are lost with very great affliction: he hath begotten a son who shall be in the extremity of want. As he came forth naked from his mother's womb, so shall he return, and shall take nothing away with him of his labour. A most deplorable evil: as he came, so shall he return. What then doth it profit him that he hath laboured for the wind? All the days of his life he eateth in darkness, and in many cares, and in misery and sorrow." Chap. v. "There is no man that liveth always, or that hopeth for this . . . for the living know that they shall die, but the dead know nothing more (*to wit, of the transactions of this world*) neither have they a reward any more; for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love also and their hatred and their envy are all perished; neither have they any part in this world, and in the work that is done under the sun. . . . Man knoweth not his own end; but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time; when it shall suddenly come upon them." Chap. ix. "If a man live many years, and hath rejoiced in them all, he must remember the darksome time and the many days, which when they shall come

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the things past shall be accused of vanity." Chap. xi. See here in the words of God himself, pronounced by the wisest of men, a striking picture of the vanity and emptiness of all temporal things, and how little value or esteem they deserve to be set upon them; and therefore he justly concludes, as the result of all he had said, "Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh, of which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them . . . because man shall go into the house of eternity . . . the dust shall return into its earth, and the spirit to God who gave it . . . Let us hear together the conclusion of the discourse; Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is all man: And all things that are done, God will bring into judgment, for every secret thing, whether it be good or evil." Chap. xii. In which just conclusion he shows us that eternity is the only thing that deserves our esteem, and attention, and our whole solicitude should be, by walking in the presence of God, by fearing him, and keeping his commandments, to secure a favourable sentence in judgment at his tribunal, and attain eternal salvation.

(4.) Lastly, what above every thing else shows us the immense value of our salvation, is, that it is the greatest and most excellent gift that God himself has to bestow upon us. The power of almighty God is above all conception, and without all bounds; his riches are beyond all measure, his liberality equal to both, and his love to man excessive; for what but the most excessive love could make him die upon a cross for us? and yet this God, so powerful, so rich, so liberal, so loving and good to men, after having done and suffered so much for us, has not in the immensity of his treasures a gift to bestow upon us more excellent and valuable in itself, more worthy and becoming him to give, and more advantageous for us to receive, than to admit us to his divine presence, to see and enjoy his infinite beauty, and in that blessed enjoyment to be eternally happy with him in glory.

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Oh how vain then, how empty, how unworthy of our regard are all temporal things, when compared to these eternal joys which await us in heaven? What signifies it what we have to suffer here, in our short and momentary pilgrimage through this life, if we can only arrive safely at the blissful enjoyment of our God hereafter? especially when we consider, that "Our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; whilst we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal! 2 Cor. iv. 17.

§ 3. *Of the Importance of our last End.*

Q. 9. Is it a matter of great importance for us to secure our salvation?

A. It is a matter, of all others without exception, of the greatest importance to us; nay, properly speaking, it is the only affair of importance we have to think of; as will evidently appear from several convincing arguments; and (1) from its own excellency, which we have already seen, and on which we may here observe, that there is nothing wherein the goodness of God towards us appears in more amiable colours than in the glorious end for which he has created us. All the other creatures that are about us on the face of the earth, have their being only for this world, and must end with time, but man is made to live when time shall be no more, and all shall be swallowed up in eternity. The hour will come when the sun, though at present so beautiful and glorious, "shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved." Matth. xxiv. 29. when "the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burnt up." 2. Pet. iii. 10. when the plants and trees and herbs

of the field and all their beauteous flowers shall be utterly destroyed, when the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and all other creatures made for the use of man, shall cease to be, and shall all perish for ever; while man himself, if he be so happy as to attain to the great end of his being, and secure his eternal salvation, shall be for ever employed in praising his great creator, and enjoying unutterable bliss and happiness beyond conception, from beholding his divine beauty. The happiness of which all other creatures are capable in this life, consists only in the gratification of their senses, in the sensual pleasure of eating and drinking and sleeping, and the like; they cannot contemplate the works of God, nor perceive his divine perfections which shine forth in all his works; they cannot adore the hand that made them, nor enjoy the sublime happiness of loving and conversing with him; but man even in this life is capable of knowing and loving his great creator, and knows that if he be faithful in his service here, he shall enjoy his blissful company for all eternity hereafter. "You have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life." Rom. vi. 22. We must not then imagine that we are created by God for no other end than to eat and drink and sleep, and enjoy the vain pleasures, the perishing riches, the transitory glory of this world. It would be thinking too meanly of the supreme being to suppose he would create such creatures as we are, capable of knowing him and loving him, of contemplating his divine perfections, of adoring him, and glorifying him, and endowed with such a violent propensity to happiness as we have, which no created object can satisfy, for no other end than that for which he has created the brute beasts that perish. No, no, that is not the end of man for which we were created; but it is, to know God, to love him and to serve him whilst we are in this world, this school of probation; that by so doing we may come at last to enjoy him in his kingdom, to be seated on a throne of glory with Jesus Christ, to be filled with the

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the plenty of his house, to be inebriated with that torrent of delight which is only to be found in the possession of the God that made us, and in the enjoyment of his divine perfections. Now what can be more important, what can be of such consequence to us as to secure to ourselves such immense happiness, which if we once attain, we shall possess for ever and ever? O how does every thing else disappear as a mere nothing, when put in competition with this? how do all temporal things become vile and worthless, yea even nauseous and distasteful in presence of this eternal' bliss? "What things were gain to me, says St. Paul, those I have counted loss for Christ. Farthermore I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and *count them but as dung* that I may gain Christ." Phil. iii. 7. So ought every christian to do who knows the sublime end of his creation; he ought to look upon all temporal things as loss, and to despise and contemn them as dung, that he may secure his eternal salvation. Now as we are placed in this world for no other end but to work out our salvation, and our time here in which we can do it, will be but for a few years at most, consequently we are here in this life only as in a place of banishment, where we are kept at a distance from our heavenly country, which is the place of our eternal habitation; and therefore ought to look upon ourselves here only as pilgrims and strangers left in this world as in a place of probation, where our great business is to fit and prepare ourselves for eternal bliss; to labour in this vineyard that we may obtain the promised reward; to run in the race which is set before us, that we gain the prize, to fight against all the enemies of our soul, that we may secure to ourselves the incorruptible crown. This is our business here, this the great affair we have to manage; and the great importance of the business will still further appear, if we consider the following truths.

- (2.) The business of securing our salvation is

properly *our own business* ; Whatever else we do in the affairs of this world, is more doing the business of others than our own. Take a view of all the worldly employments of mankind, we shall find this to be universally true, that whatever toil and labour, whatever care and solicitude it may cost them, all they can reap from their labours for themselves is only food and raiment, and, if you will, some sensual amusement, but the greatest part of the fruits of their labours goes to other people. It is true, some may have more delicate food, and more costly raiment than others, but this does not necessarily make them more happy ; the beggar with his rags and coarse fare often enjoys more real content, more solid happiness than the king. What hardships, what poor living, what dangers does not the sailor undergo in the course of his long voyages ? at last he returns home, with his ship full of riches, and the productions of foreign countries ; But what fruit does he reap of all his labours ? Some scanty wages, scarce sufficient to keep him in food and raiment till he goes to sea again ; whilst all the valuable things he has with so much toil and risk brought home, goes to the rich merchant who employed him. What toils, what fatigue does not the soldier endure in time of war ? What dangers of losing his health, his members, his life itself, is he not exposed to ? How does he renounce his very will itself, and become a slave to the will of his commanders ? And what fruit does he reap from all this ? Six pence a day and a new coat in the year : and when the war is ended, is left to pine away his days in misery from the loss of members he has suffered, with perhaps some small pension, scarce sufficient to afford him the plainest food and the coarsest raiment ; while the glory of his victories goes to his king and officers, and the conquests he has made are distributed to others whom he does not know. Who can enumerate the labours and toils of the husbandman ? his whole life is a continual circle of fatigue from the one year's end to the other ; and for whom

whom does he labour? all the profits of his toil go to enrich his landlord, while what he receives himself is very often scarce sufficient to maintain himself and family in food and raiment. And the same we find is universally the case in all the different states and employments of life; in all which we are doing for others much more than for ourselves. It is true indeed in many cases, besides food and raiment, people gain great store of riches from their labours; but this does not in the least alter the matter; for either they spend these riches in riotous living, or they hoard them up in their coffers. If they spend them in riotous living, they will indeed have richer cloaths and more delicious food than the poor, but still food and raiment of one sort or another includes all their portion of their riches, and whilst they throw them away extravagantly upon these things, and upon other vain amusements, what are they doing but benefiting the merchants, and innkeepers, and others such, by throwing their money into their hands? If on the other hand they hoard up their treasures in their coffers, for whom is all their labour? for those that come after them, who will seldom or never think more upon them, who will perhaps be as lavish in spending, as they were anxious in gathering, and who will be enjoying the fruits of their labours and living upon them in mirth and jollity, while their own poor souls shall perhaps be tormented in hell's devouring flames! So that in whatever light we consider it, still it remains a certain truth, that whatever worldly affair one is engaged in, he labours much more for others than he does for himself; it is the business of others he is doing more than his own. But with the important business of our salvation it is not so; whatever pains we take there, the profit is all our own; all the fruit of our labours comes to ourselves, we reap the whole benefit of the toils we undergo to secure it. If we fast, and with St. Paul, chastise our body and bring it into subjection, by so doing we pay off the debt we owe to the divine justice, and hasten the time of our admission.

admission to eternal bliss; if we pray, our prayers draw down innumerable graces to our souls, and more effectually secure our salvation; if we give plentiful alms to the poor, that “purges away sin and delivers from death, and makes a man find mercy and life everlasting.” Tobit xii. Even a cup of cold water given for Christ’s sake shall not want a reward; nothing is lost here, but every thing returns with immense profit to our own bosom. “Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, *says the holy scripture*, that walk in his ways: For thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands: blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee.” Psa. cxxvii. 1. This being the case, how vastly more important is it for us, to labour strenuously for our salvation, which is our own business, than for any worldly affair whatsoever, which is always the business of other people more than our own? And how great is the folly of those who give up themselves so wholly to their worldly affairs as to neglect the most important affair of their own salvation? What should we think of the master of a family, who should employ himself all the day long in managing the affairs of other people, and let his own family starve at home? What should we think of a farmer, who should employ his cattle and servants in labouring his neighbour’s land, and leaving his own farm uncultivated? Such is our folly, or rather an emblem of our folly, when we neglect our own affair, the affair of our salvation, and mind only the concerns of this world, which are the affairs of others more than of ourselves. It is true indeed, that even our worldly affairs, such as belong to the state of life in which providence has placed us, may all be so managed as to contribute to our eternal salvation, and this is the only end to which they ought always to be referred, and made subservient; but this is what evidently shows of how much greater importance our salvation is than they; they are but as the means to acquire our salvation, have no merit in themselves but in as far as they conduce to that

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Chap. V. *The last End of Man.* 191

that great end, and are good for nothing and lost if not referred to it. But alas! how seldom are they used for this purpose? and here lies our great misfortune. Miserable will the poor wretch be at the hour of death, when casting back his thoughts upon his past conduct, he shall find that he has been exceedingly busy all his days in doing for others, but has done nothing in his own great business, the securing his salvation. He may have been of great service to his country, in gaining victories over its enemies, or in managing its public affairs; he may have been of great service to his friends, in getting them posts and places; or to his children in giving them good education, and laying up a fortune for them; but if with all this he has neglected his own soul, what is it all, but labouring for other people, and neglecting himself? And to him will be said at that tremendous moment on which eternity depends, "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Luke xii. 20.

(3.) Our salvation is not only our own business, the affair that properly belongs to ourselves, but it is in fact *our only necessary business*; the only thing for which we were sent into this world. Our blessed Saviour declares this in his answer to Martha, when she seemed displeased to see her sister Mary so taken up with hearing him, that she left her to toil alone, "Martha, Martha, *said he*, thou art careful and art troubled about many things, but *one thing is necessary*; Mary hath chosen the best part." Luke xii. 41. Our salvation is the one thing necessary; every thing is but accidental and trifling in comparison to this, and of no manner of importance, whether it be done or not, if we can only secure our salvation. This is the necessary business of all mankind, the king and the beggar, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the wise man and the fool; it is nowise necessary for a man to be rich or learned, or great in the world, to be of this or that employment, to be in
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one state of life or another ; but it is absolutely necessary for all to work out their salvation ; for this, and for this alone we are in being, and better for us not to be at all, than to lose it ; as our Saviour himself said of Judas, foreseeing his reprobation, “ It were better for that man, if he had not been born.” Mat. xxvi. 24. All the creatures about us were made only for this purpose, to serve us in this great business of our salvation ; all our faculties, powers, and members, were given us only for this end ; our eyes were not given us to look at unlawful objects, and unjustly covet what belongs to others, but to behold the glorious works of God, in order to fill our hearts with gratitude and love to him, and enable us to go about those duties of life which he requires of us, as the means to save our souls ; our ears were not given us to be open to detractions and calumnies and sinful conversation, but to hear and learn the sacred laws of God, and enable us to discharge those duties of christian charity which are necessary for acquiring salvation ; our tongue was not given us to profane the adorable name of God, or imprecate evil upon ourselves and others, but to be employed in praying to God and praising him, and in performing those duties to our fellow creatures, which the law of God requires of us in order to be saved : our time itself, our whole life, is given us for no other end but to save our souls, and all the wondrous things that God has done for us, whether in the order of nature or of grace, whether for our souls or bodies, are all intended only for the same purpose. Whatever other business we are engaged in, however important it may seem in the eyes of the deluded world, unless it conduce to our salvation, is of no manner of value or worth, because it is all lost for eternity ! Our salvation is our only necessary affair, and to which every thing ought to yield.

(4.) But the vast importance and necessity of our salvation is principally shown from the dreadful consequences of losing it. “ What will it profit a man,

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V. Chap V. *The last End of Man.* 193

says Jesus Christ himself, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark xiii. 36. Oh! here it is indeed, above all other considerations, that we see of what immense importance it is to us, and how absolutely necessary to save our souls. Exalt the importance of all worldly affairs as much as you please; look upon its riches and pleasures, and honours, as things of the highest value; put all the esteem upon them that ever entered into the heart of man; and suppose yourself master of the whole universe, yet how soon must your enjoyment of all this end? and when you die, what will it all profit you, if you be buried in hell fire, and condemned for ever to those eternal flames, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not extinguished; where there shall be nothing but weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; where fire and brimstone and snares shall be the portion of their cup; where the Lord Almighty shall give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn and feel for ever; where tribulation and anguish shall be their eternal inheritance; where they shall fall without honour, and be a reproach among the dead for ever; where shame shall cover them, and fear shall be upon every face; where they shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of grief and sadness, and be made to drink it up even to the dregs; where they shall be salted with fire, and where the Lord shall make them as an oven of fire in the time of his anger; where they shall be made a desolation and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a curse; where they shall have no rest night nor day, no comfort, no peace, no ease; no, not so much as a single drop of water to cool their parched tongues; where they shall seek death and shall not find it; they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them; where they shall gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains and wounds; where, in fine, they shall be for ever banished from the presence of God, excluded from

from the kingdom of heaven, and eternally cut off from the joy of his saints, for which they were created? Gracious God! what a complication of miseries is this? And yet this is what, the word of God assures us, will be the eternal portion of those who lose their salvation. What madness and folly then must it be to neglect that great, that important affair, or to expose it to the smallest danger of being lost, for any consideration this world can afford! or what is there in this world that can bear the smallest proportion, in worth, in merit or importance, to the salvation of our soul! What madness then to deliver up our poor soul into the hands of its enemies, to ruin ourselves, and make ourselves for ever miserable, for the momentary and trifling enjoyments of this place of banishment? If we miscarry in any of our worldly affairs, it may be repaired some other way; and though it be entirely lost, we may have many other advantages to comfort us, and salvation will superabundantly make up for all; but if we lose our salvation, it is lost for ever; the loss is irreparable, nor is it possible to find any comfort under it, for "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" if that be lost, all good is lost, and misery and wo must be our portion for ever. Oh! let us then remember, that we have but *one soul*, which if we lose, we ourselves are lost for ever; we can die but *one death*, upon which eternity depends, and if we die ill, there is no salvation for us; there is but *one Judge*, upon whose sentence our final doom depends, and if he give sentence against us, there is no appeal from his tribunal; *one only sentence* will be passed upon us, and if it be not the happy sentence of "*Come ye blessed of my father*", it must of necessity be that other, "*Go ye cursed into everlasting fire*"; there is but *one heaven*, where the blessed shall be happy for ever; from which if we be excluded, our portion must necessarily be in the torments of hell; there is but *one eternity*, which if it be not for us an eternity of bliss, must infallibly be an eternity of misery and wo; there is but *one God*, whom

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whom if we do not enjoy in heaven, we shall for ever be slaves to the devil in hell ; there is but *one Jesus Christ* the Saviour of mankind, whose holy law if we do not obey here, we shall be for ever excluded from his salvation hereafter. What an important affair then is our salvation ! “ Oh that men would be wise and understand, and would provide for their last end ! ” Deut. xxxii. 29.

§ 4. *Of the Difficulty of acquiring our last End.*

Q. 10. Is it an easy matter to save our souls and acquire our last end ?

A. Nothing is more unreasonable than the conduct of worldly people with regard to this point. If you exhort them to amend their lives and embrace a life of christian virtue and piety, they immediately oppose the great difficulties of such a life, and how hard a matter it is to work out one's salvation, the thought of which astonishes and discourages them, and sometimes even throws them into despair. If on the other hand you represent to them the danger of delay in a matter of so great importance, and especially the dangers of a death-bed repentance, they immediately reply, that God is merciful, that he will not the death of a sinner, and that one act of repentance at their last moments will be sure to find acceptance, and make up their peace with God. Thus they are persuaded that the way of salvation is extremely difficult ; and they act as if nothing was more easy than to work out their salvation. The truth is, the road to salvation is both difficult and easy ; and they abuse the different senses in which it is so, to their own perdition. To acquire salvation is a most difficult matter to those who are slaves to their passions, attached to the enjoyments of this world, and immersed in sensuality and carnal pleasures ; but it is easy to those who know its value, and place their

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affections on God and eternal goods. It is difficult to flesh and blood, and to all the perverse dispositions of our corrupt nature; but it is easy to a soul who by christian vigilance and repeated victories over nature, has rectified the disorders of the heart, and brought the body into proper subjection. In a word, it is difficult at the beginning to those, who, like young Samuel, “do not yet, *experimentally*, know the Lord, and to whom the *interior* word of the Lord has not yet been revealed.” 1 Kings iii. 7. but it is easy, yea delightful to those who with David, “taste and know how good the Lord is, and what a multitude of sweetness he has hidden for those that fear him.” Now these last stand in little or no need of exhortations to encourage them to a virtuous life; carried on by the wings of holy love, and knowing from their own blessed experience what happiness is found in the service of God, they are ready to sacrifice all that is near or dear to them in this world rather than abandon it; nay, the more they have to suffer for God’s sake, the more their joy and consolation abounds. But worldly minded people, who live in sin, and lukewarm christians who live in a kind of indifference about their souls, have great need indeed to be roused out of their insensibility, and encouraged as much as possible, by every consideration which can make any impression upon them: But at the same time it would be a dangerous encouragement and fatal delusion to make them imagine that the securing their salvation is a matter of no difficulty, and that they can set about it at any time they please; this would only confirm them in their folly, and encourage them either to put off that important business from day to day, till they be caught in their sins and lost for ever; or else to set about it with so much coldness and tepidity, as never to take any effectual step to secure it. To them the great work of salvation is a work of great difficulty, and requires the strongest resolution and their utmost efforts to do any thing to the purpose in it. And the longer

longer they delay setting about it in earnest, the greater the difficulty always becomes; for by delay their bad habits are strengthened, their passions become more violent, their attachments to sinful objects are more confirmed, the power the devil gets over them is greater, and they themselves become more and more unworthy of the assistance of God's grace, from their more frequent abuses of his mercy. But however great the difficulty may be at present, it ought by no means to discourage them; on the contrary, it ought the more effectually to incite them to set about that great work without delay, and to set about it in earnest; their all is at stake! the delay of a day may prove their eternal ruin! at any rate it will make their labour the more difficult! At present God offers them mercy and all necessary assistance, but if they reject his offer now, who knows if it will afterwards be made them? The work is difficult, and they are weak; but God is strong, and "we can do all things through him that strengthens us!" His grace will never be wanting to us, if we be not wanting to it; but if we reject it when he offers, we render ourselves unworthy of it! The work is difficult! but it is not impossible; for "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but with the temptation will make issue, that we may come off with victory." 1 Cor. x. The work is difficult! but it is of the utmost importance, and of absolute necessity; therefore we ought to set about it with the greater vigour and the most determined resolution, to sacrifice every thing else to accomplish it. Finally, the work is difficult! but its difficulty is only in the first beginnings, and when these are courageously overcome, and we are fairly "entered into the paths of righteousness, our steps shall no longer be straitened," as the Holy Ghost himself assures us, Prov. iv. 11. It is a yoke, but it is the yoke of Christ; he will bear it along with us, and assures us that in his company, it is sweet and easy. These are the proper sentiments

with which the difficulties of a virtuous life ought to inspire us, if we apprehend as we ought the importance of our salvation, and how much it behoves us to take every necessary means to secure it.

Q. 11. What idea does the scripture give of the difficulty of attaining our salvation ?

A. Our blessed master thought it highly necessary to instruct us fully on this point, in order to animate us to be the more in earnest about it ; and he forewarns us of the difficulties, that we may not be disheartened when we meet with them ; but at the same time he assures us of all necessary assistance both to enable us to overcome them, and to sweeten the bitterness of them. These last we have seen at large, Chap. IV. We shall now see how he describes the difficulties. And (1.) from his similitudes and parables ; he proposes our salvation to us as a glorious kingdom, but a kingdom which “suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.” Matt. xi. 12. He compares it to a noble edifice, but tells us we must “renounce all that we possess,” to defray the charges of the building, otherwise we cannot be his disciples. Luke xiv. 33. He likens it to a delicious supper, prepared by a great man to entertain his friends, but assures us that no worldly concern must hinder us from accepting the invitation, neither farm nor merchandize nor marriage ; declaring “none of those who are invited, *and are detained by such excuses*, shall taste of his supper.” Luke xiv. 24. He tells us that our salvation is like to a pearl of great price, a treasure hid in a field, but us assures that we must sell all we have to purchase it, and even rejoice in doing so. Matt. xiii. 44. (2.) From his express declarations, and the strict command he lays upon all his followers to deny themselves, to mortify their passions, to bear their cross, and the like, as we have seen above at large, Chap. IV. Q. 4. through the whole ; from all which it is evident, that the road to salvation is most difficult to our corrupted nature, and hard to flesh and blood, and therefore our blessed Saviour himself cries, with

with a kind of astonishment, "How narrow is the gate, and strait the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!" Matt. vii. 14.

Q. 12. What consequences does the scripture draw from this difficulty of securing our salvation?

A. Not that we should be disheartened by it, or hindered from undertaking that great and important business; but on the contrary, that we should be excited to apply to it with greater fervour, resolution, and perseverance. Thus, (1.) "A certain man said to Jesus, Lord, are they few that are saved? but he said to them, *strive to enter by the narrow gate*; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able." Luke xiii. 23. Here we see that from the very difficulty he exhorts them to set about it in good earnest; *strive*, says he, that is, contend, use all your endeavours, strain every nerve; it is not enough *to seek*, in a work of such difficulty; *many shall seek*, but that wont do; because they do not *strive*, they shall not be able to enter. He then goes on to animate them in their good endeavours, from the vast importance of the business, setting before their eyes the dreadful consequences of miscarrying in it. (2.) St. Paul reasons in the same manner; he shows us the difficulty, by proposing our salvation as a prize for which we must run, and as a crown for which we must fight, but for that very reason concludes, how diligent we should be to run well and fight bravely, and confirms his conclusion by his own example: "Know you not, *says he*, that they that run in a race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? *So run, that you may obtain*. And every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but *we an incorruptible one*! I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air: but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away." 1 Cor. ix. 24. (3.) Whatever

progress this holy apostle made, he never relented in his fervour, but went on daily striving and daily advancing, and he exhorts all to follow his example; "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, *I press towards the mark*, to the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded . . . Be followers of me, brethren." Philip. iii. 13. (4.) He exhorts us pressingly to this perseverance from the example of Christ, and the greatness of the prize, saying, "Laying aside every weight, and the sin that surroundeth us, let us run by patience to the fight that is set before us; looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who *having joy set before him*, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God: for *think diligently* upon him, that endureth such opposition from sinners against himself, that you *be not wearied, fainting in your minds*." Heb. xii. 1. (5.) Our blessed Saviour conjures us in the most pressing manner, not only to strive in this great business, and persevere in striving, but to be always ready, always upon the watch, never to relent our fervour, never to be found sleeping, nor give way to the allurements of flesh and blood, lest we be caught unprepared and be lost for ever; This he sets forth to us in the most affecting manner in different similitudes and parables; as that of the master coming home upon his servants at an unexpected hour, Mat. xxiv. 22. that of the foolish virgins waiting for the bride-groom, Mat. xxv. 1. also of the man going to a far country, on which he says, "Watch ye therefore, for you know not when the Lord of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming on a sudden he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all, *Watch*." Mark xiii. 35. And particularly from the uncertainty of the day of our death, where he speaks thus; "Take heed

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to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly; for as a snare shall it come upon all that sit upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, *praying at all times*, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the son of man." Luke xxi. 34. (6.) Finally, St. Peter thus presses upon us to be diligent in this great work, from the hopes of the reward; "Wherefore, brethren, *labour the more*, that by good works you may make your calling and election sure; for so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. i. 10. And St. Paul exhorts us to do this with fear and trembling, considering the danger of misgiving, but putting our whole confidence in the goodness of Almighty God, with whose assistance all will be easy for us, "With fear and trembling, work out your salvation, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to his good will." Phil. ii. 12. And no wonder that the utmost diligence in this duty be so earnestly recommended to us; "for if the just man shall *scarcely* be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Pet. iv. 18.

§ 5. *Of the Consequences which follow from the Excellency and Importance of our last End.*

Q. 13. What are the consequences that necessarily flow from the excellency and vast importance of our salvation?

A. Whoever reflects seriously on what we have seen above, on the immense value of our salvation, on the endless duration of eternity, and on what it is to be eternally happy or eternally miserable, cannot fail to see, in their strongest light, the most important

ant consequences which flow from these truths. Indeed the most sublime rules of christian morality, both for regulating the judgment we ought to form of things, and directing our practice, are founded in them. We shall here consider some of the most necessary.

(1.) Seeing that our salvation is a good infinitely more excellent than all the goods this world can afford; yea, the greatest good that God himself, though a being of infinite power, infinite riches and infinite liberality, can bestow upon us; and seeing it is of such immense importance to us, that if we lose it, we must of necessity be eternally miserable, who does not see all at once that it is our bounden duty to esteem and prefer our salvation, before every thing else without exception? nay, that we must be void of reason, void of judgment, void of common sense, to prefer any thing else whatsoever before it? Is it not the constant rule we follow in all earthly concerns, to esteem and prefer that most, which is in itself most valuable and most useful to us? Does not common sense, and the very feelings of our heart impell us to do so? Seeing therefore our salvation surpasses every thing else, without all comparison, both in its own great excellency and in its importance to us, certainly we ought to esteem and prefer it to every thing without exception. What the wise man says of his esteem for that heavenly wisdom, which is but the means to attain salvation, shows us, what we ought, with much greater reason, to be able to say with truth of our esteem for salvation itself, which is the great end to which that wisdom conducts us, "I preferred wisdom, *says he*, before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison to her. Neither did I compare to her any precious stone; for all gold, in comparison of her, is a little sand; and silver, in respect to her, shall be accounted as clay; I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light; for her light cannot be put out... for she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become friends of God." *Wisd. vii. 8.*

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Now if wisdom was so much esteemed and preferred before every thing valuable in this life, because it makes us here, in time, to be friends of God; how much more ought we to esteem and prefer our salvation, by which we are put in possession of God, transformed into the image of his glory, and inseparably united with him, in unspeakable happiness, for all eternity? St. Paul was perfectly sensible of this, and declares that "he counted all things to be but loss; yea, that he counted them all as dung, that he might gain Christ." Phil. iii. 8. From which two passages of holy writ, we see that we ought not only to prefer our salvation to every thing else, but that we ought to esteem it *only*, as the *only* object worthy of our regard, and look upon all other things as a *little sand*, or *clay*, as *dung*, as a mere *nothing* in comparison of it; as being things so far below it in real worth and importance to us, that there can be no comparison between them.

(2.) It follows with no less evidence, that this high esteem and preference which we give to our salvation, as the only object worthy of our regard, ought to be the supreme rule and standard, by which to form our judgment of every thing else. For it is self-evident, that, if our salvation be an affair of such inconceivable excellency and importance, that in comparison of it no earthly object has any intrinsic value at all, nothing ought to be esteemed a real good, but what conduces to our salvation; and nothing ought to be esteemed a real evil, but what deprives us of it, or puts us in danger of losing it; and the more any thing conduces to our salvation, the greater good we ought to esteem it, as on the contrary, the more any thing leads us away from, or endangers our salvation, we ought undoubtedly to consider it as the greater evil. Hence it follows, (1.) that, as we have seen above, Chap. IV. Q. 3. No. 5. how much worldly prosperity is an enemy to our salvation, and that wealth and abundance of earthly pleasures is always most dangerous, and for the most part pernicious

pernicious to the soul, therefore we ought by no means to set our affections upon these things, nor look upon them as real goods, but rather as most dangerous evils, and consequently, laying aside all "solicitude about what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed," as Jesus Christ so warmly enjoins us, Matt. vi. labour, according to the will of God, in that state of life in which he has placed us, to procure such food and raiment as his blessed providence shall be pleased to afford us, and therewith be contented. (2.) As we have also seen above, Chap. IV. Q. 9. how much the tribulations and afflictions of this life contribute both to our spiritual happiness here, and our salvation hereafter, that therefore we ought to look upon them as real goods, and to embrace them as such, instead of flying from them. And though the weakness of our nature should not have courage to seek after them, yet we should cheerfully receive them when God sends them, and use our utmost endeavours to profit by them. (3.) That as sin is the only thing that effectually ruins our salvation, we ought to have the utmost abhorrence and detestation of it, and cheerfully undergo all temporal evil whatsoever, rather than be so unhappy as be guilty of it. The saints of God were so much convinced of this, that many of them not only suffered the loss of all that was near or dear to them in this world, yea laid down their lives in the midst of the greatest torments, rather than offend God by sin; but some have even declared, and left it in their writings on record, that in the supposition that they were to be under the necessity of either committing a mortal sin, or of being thrown headlong into hell, they would without all hesitation rather be plunged headlong into the flames of hell in their innocence, than commit a mortal sin to avoid it. And indeed, if no man in his senses would drink a cup of deadly poison even for a kingdom, because he knows his doing so would kill his body, and then what would his kingdom avail him? how much more ought we to reject

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Chap. V. *The last End of Man.* 205

reject with horror the committing a mortal sin, though to gain the whole world? for mortal sin kills the soul, and “ what will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Mark viii. 36. (4.) That we ought not only to fly from, and abhor sin itself, as the greatest of all evils, but also to avoid with horror all occasions of sin, all dangers of being exposed to sin. What man in his senses would wantonly expose any earthly treasure to the danger of being lost? Who, for any worldly advantage, would venture to walk for a mile, among loose stones, upon the brink of a dreadful precipice, where if he slipped a foot he must fall down and be crushed to pieces? how much more ought we to abhor and fly from the danger of sin, when God himself declares to us, that “ he that loves the danger shall perish in it?” Eccl. iii. 27. (5.) From the same principle we learn what judgment we ought to form of the books we read, of the company we frequent, of the recreations and amusements we use, of the employments and state of life we embrace; and in short, of every thing we engage in, in this life; all which are then only to be esteemed as good and laudable, when they contribute to promote our salvation, and tend to the good of the soul; but if they have a contrary tendency, and expose us to the danger of hurting our souls, we ought to abhor them as real evils, whatever pleasure or advantage our self love may otherwise receive from them.

(3.) From the excellency and importance of salvation it follows, in the third place, that we ought to have a great and ardent desire of obtaining it. Nature itself dictates to us, or rather impells us, to desire any great good, which we highly esteem, especially if it depends upon ourselves to acquire it. If therefore we have that just sense and esteem of our salvation which it deserves, this must naturally excite in our hearts the most sincere and fervent desires of securing it; if, like all the saints of God, we were persuaded that our salvation is our *supreme and sovereign good*, like them we would desire it above all things else
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whatever ; if, with them, we firmly believed that our salvation is our *only real good, our only perfect happiness* and last end, with them we would also desire it with the whole bent of our soul, as the only object worthy of our desires and affections ; the goods of this life would become insipid to us, the world would be a place of banishment for us, and our hearts and affections being fixed on things above, our wishes and sighs would only be for heaven, our true country. David was full of these holy sentiments ; “ As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, my God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God ; when shall I come *and appear before the face of God?*” Ps. xli. 1. “ O God my God, to thee do I watch at break of day. For thee my soul hath thirsted, for thee my flesh, O how many ways !” Ps. lxii. 1. “ How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.” Ps. lxxxiii. 1. In like manner St. Paul, longing after the happiness of seeing God, and at the same time desirous of doing good to souls by his apostolical labours among them, suffers a strong conflict in his own mind. “ I am straitened, *says he*, between two ; having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing, by far the better ; but to abide still in the flesh is needful for you.” Phil. i. 23. Now this ardent desire of salvation, which our saviour compares to that of hunger and thirst, is of the greatest advantage to us ; because it is one of the principal means of obtaining it from God : for “ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.” Matth. v. and God “ filleth the hungry with good things.” Luke i. 53. and the scripture assures us, that such ardent desires are the most effectual means of procuring that heavenly wisdom, which brings us to God, and puts us in possession of salvation. “ Wisdom is easily seen by them *that love her*, and is found by them *that seek her* ; she preventeth them *that covet her*, so that she first sheweth

sheweth herself to them . . . the beginning of her is *the most true desire of discipline* . . . the *desire of wisdom* bringeth to the everlasting kingdom." Wisd. vi. 13. Hence we may see how careful we should be to excite and nourish in our souls the most ardent desires of our salvation, by often meditating on the vanity and nothingness of all temporal things, that we may the more heartily despise them ; and on the excellency, the dignity and importance of things eternal, that we may love, esteem and desire them.

(4.) This earnest desire of salvation must not be confined to the heart alone ; it must be an efficacious desire, a desire that proceeds to action, and must impel us to do with great diligence every thing that God requires of us, in order to obtain our salvation. It is a natural and necessary consequence of our having a great esteem for, and an earnest desire of any good object, to be active and diligent in using the means to acquire it ; what do not the slaves of the world both do and suffer to get possession of those earthly goods which they esteem and desire ? how much more ought we cheerfully to do and suffer for salvation ? Mere desires alone, if they can be called desires, will never bring us to that happiness, but with " the wicked and slothful servant will end in utter darkness " and eternal misery. Mat. xxv. 26. for " desires kill the slothful ; his hands refuse to work at all ; he longeth and desireth all the day." Prov. xxi. 25. " The sluggard willeth and willeth not, but the soul of *them that work* shall be made fat." Prov. xiii. 4. Hence the scripture, showing us in what manner the desire of wisdom brings us to the everlasting kingdom, makes this beautiful gradation of the active steps to be taken for this purpose ; " The beginning of wisdom is the *most true desire* of discipline ; and the care of discipline is *love* ; and love is the *keeping of her laws* ; and the keeping of her laws is the firm foundation of *incorruption* ; and incorruption *bringeth near to God* : therefore the desire of wisdom bringeth to an *everlasting kingdom*." Wisd. vi. 18. And to show how diligent

we should be in this great work, and how much depends upon our being so, the wise man says, "If thou shalt call for wisdom, and incline thy ear to prudence; if thou shalt *seek her as money*, and shalt *dig for her as for a treasure*; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt *find the knowledge of God*, Prov. ii. 3. Empty desires of such an immense good, as is found in the possession of God, are rather a mocking of God than an honouring him; they show rather that we despise than esteem him. In all our worldly affairs, the means we use either to acquire, or augment, or preserve the good things we love, are always proportioned to the love and esteem we have for them; if we esteem them little, we take little pains about them; but if we esteem them much, we use the greater diligence; and if we have a very great esteem for them, and an ardent desire of acquiring them, we never fail to use the most efficacious means we can think of, and spare neither pains nor labour to procure them; witness the behaviour of a man who has a passion for riches; witness all those who are slaves to lust or ambition, or any other violent passion; what they do and suffer to obtain what they wish, shows the greatness of their esteem, and the violence of their desires to obtain it. If, therefore, we pretend to esteem our salvation as it deserves, and to desire above all things to see and enjoy God, but yet take no pains to acquire this happiness, what judgment will God form of such esteem? What value will he put upon such desires? We must therefore call to mind the words of St. Paul, "Be not deceived: God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting. And in doing good, let us not fail. For in due time, we shall reap, not fainting." Gal. vi. 7.

(5.) But if we go a step further, and reflect that our salvation is not only an affair of the greatest value and
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excellency in itself, not only a business of the greatest importance to us ; but that it is the ONE THING NECESSARY, the *only business* for which we have our being, the *only end* why God has placed us in this world ; and that all our senses, powers and faculties are *only* given us as helps to secure it ; that all the other creatures around us are made for *no other end*, but *only* to serve as means to enable us to secure it ; and that our time itself, our whole life is bestowed upon us for this *only* purpose of working out our salvation ; if, I say, we have a just sense and full conviction of these truths ; and add to all this, that it is an affair of great difficulty to flesh and blood, that it requires all our pains and all our endeavours, and that God Almighty himself judges our whole lifetime necessary to complete this great work ; we cannot fail to see it, clear as noon-day, that we ought not only to labour diligently to save our souls, but that this great work ought to have the preference to every thing else ; yea, that it ought to be our *only employment*, and engross our *whole attention*, and that every thing else ought to be referred to this, and made subservient to it. In fact, if this be the only affair of absolute necessity, if all the other affairs of life have no real merit or value, and are all lost for eternity, unless they be of service to our salvation, is it not evident that this alone ought to engross all our attention, and that every thing else ought to be done in such manner as to be subservient to this ? This surely was the judgment made by Jesus Christ on this matter, when, after exhorting us to lay aside all solicitude for even the necessities of life, he says, “ Seek ye therefore, *first* the kingdom of God and his justice.” Mat. vi. 33. Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, says he ; the kingdom of God is the salvation of our souls ; this he commands us to seek *first*, that is, in the first place, above all earthly things ; but he says nothing of what we are to seek *next* ; nay, he assures us, if we seek first our salvation, that all the necessities of life for food and raiment, shall be added to us,

without our being *sollicitous* in seeking after them; and therefore it is plain, that by seeking *first* the kingdom of God, he means, that we ought to seek *it only*; that every thing else should be sought *only* with reference to it, as the great and ultimate end of all we do. Our Saviour adds, Seek first the kingdom of God, *and his justice*; the justice of God is *the accomplishment of his will*, by obedience to his commands; to seek the justice of God, then, is to love, serve, and obey him, as the necessary and only means to secure our salvation. He commands us then to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his justice, to show us, that our first, our chief, our only employment ought to be, with all diligence and attention to love, serve, and obey God here, that is, to glorify him in this life, that we may come to enjoy him in his kingdom in the life to come. To glorify God, and to save our souls, are two things essentially united together; it is impossible to glorify God in the way he requires of us here, but we must infallibly save our souls hereafter; and it is impossible for us to save our souls hereafter, but by glorifying God according to his will, while we remain in this mortal life; and therefore our Saviour joins them both together in the above text, as the only great employment which ought to occupy our whole attention. St. Peter was very sensible of this obligation, and therefore exhorts us earnestly in whatever we speak or do, to refer all to this great end. "If any man speak, *says he*, let him speak as the words of God: if any man minister, let him do it, as of the power which God administereth, that *in all things* God may be honoured, through Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. iv. 11. St. Paul also shows us in what light we ought to view all the goods or evils of this world, and in what manner we ought to use them, in these words, "This therefore I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that they also who have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as they that rejoice not; and they that buy,

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as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as though they used it not ; for the fashion of this world passeth away." 1 Cor. vii. 29. See how he begins by putting us in mind that *the time is short*, that the whole of our life, especially of what may yet remain of it, is short for the great work of our salvation, and therefore that we ought by no means to take up our heads with the trifling things of this life, so as to neglect that great work ; but use them with as much indifference as if we used them not, always remembering how vain and transitory they are, and that the *fashion of this* world and of all it contains, soon *passeth away*. But a little after, in the same epistle, he shows us what ought to occupy all our attention in every thing we do, saying, " Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, *do all to the glory of God.*" 1 Cor. x. 31. and in another place he says, " *all whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*" Coloss. iii. 17. See here in what strong expressions he shows us our great obligation of referring every thing we do to God, and consequently to our salvation ! and is not this the very thing that God himself declares by his prophet Moses, in these awful words ? " Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God, is one Lord : thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength ; and these words which I command thee this day, shall be in *thy heart* ; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt *meditate* upon them, *sitting* in thy house, and *walking* in thy journey, *sleeping* and *rising* ; and thou shalt *bind them as a sign* upon thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move between thy eyes, and thou shalt *write them* in the entry and on the doors of thy house." Deut. vi. 4. See here in what strong expressions the great God requires that we should continually be employed in the great work of our salvation, and how it ought to enter into every thing we do, and that every thing else should be

made subservient to it! Hear also how the wise man exhorts us not to occupy our thoughts with things that do not concern us, but to employ them continually on the great and important affair of our salvation, "Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability; but the things that God hath commanded thee, *think on them always*, and in many of his works be not curious: For it is not necessary for thee to see with thy eyes the things that are hid. In *unnecessary matters* be not *over-curious*, and in many of his works thou shalt not be inquisitive; for many things are shown to thee above the understanding of men: and the suspicion of them hath deceived many, and hath detained their minds in vanity . . . Ecclus. iii. 22. Wherefore, "*in all thy ways think upon God*, and he will direct thy steps." Prov. iii. 6. For the same reason Almighty God himself declares, that we ought to glory in no earthly things whatever, however it may abound with us, but that all our joy and glory ought to be in him alone. "Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me; for I am the Lord." Jer. ix. 23. Seeing then that these things are so, and that every christian is bound to believe these divine truths, or renounce his religion; what shall we think of such numbers of christians, who throw away those precious moments, given them to work out their salvation, in idle, useless, dangerous, and often sinful employments and amusements? Oh what will their cutting regret one day be, when they shall see with their eyes what they now say they believe, and compare what they have been with what they ought to be?

(6.) There remains yet another consequence, of no less importance than those we have seen. And that is, that we not only ought to make all the things of this life subservient to our salvation, and perform

all we do in our worldly affairs, with reference to this great end ; but that we ought to be ready, if ever the case should happen, to sacrifice every thing in life, goods, friends, honour, ease, health, yea, life itself, for the sake of our souls, and to secure our salvation. Does this seem too great a sacrifice ? the world itself, will condemn us, if we think so. What does not the world require of its votaries, to gain and preserve the goods it proposes to them ? What do not the slaves of the world sacrifice to gain them ? Does not the covetous man sacrifice his ease, his repose, his reputation, the very enjoyment of the necessities of life, to fill his coffers ? Does not the gamester and the drunkard sacrifice their time, their money, their peace of mind, their honour, their children, their wives, their health, and very often their life itself, for the unworthy pleasure of handling a pack of cards, and drinking a glass of wine ? Does not the ambitious military man sacrifice his ease, his health, his members, yea and his life too, for the vain fumes of a little worldly glory ? And what is more deplorable still, do not all these worldings, in numberless cases, sacrifice their religion, their conscience, their soul itself, to gain these their worldly views ? And shall a christian think it too hard to sacrifice all temporal things for his salvation ? Will not the world itself condemn us before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, if we do so ? But let us hear what Jesus Christ has decided upon this matter. “ Every one, *says he*, that doth not renounce *all that he possesseth*, cannot be my disciple.” Luke xiv. 33. “ He that loveth father or mother more than me, is *not worthy of me* ; he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is *not worthy of me*. He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, is *not worthy of me*.” Mat. x. 37. “ If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and *his own life also*, he cannot be my disciple.” Luke xiv. 26. that is, who is not willing to renounce them, when they come in com-

petition with our salvation, and would keep us from him. "If thy right eye cause thee to offend (*that is, if it be a stumbling block, or occasion of sin to thee,*) pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, than that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off and cast it from thee, for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, than that thy whole body should go into hell." Mat. v. 29. See here the doctrine of Jesus Christ on this important subject. Could he express in stronger terms our strict obligation of sacrificing every thing in this world, however near or dear it be to us, possessions, friends, relations, members, yea, life itself, rather than offend him and lose our salvation? St. Paul, who well knew the force of what his blessed master here says, shows us his own dispositions, and those of all true christians on this head, in the most expressive manner. "Who shall separate us, *says he*, from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? shall distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . but in all these things we overcome, because of him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 35. These are the noble sentiments of a true christian, of one who knows what salvation is, and what immense incomparable happiness and bliss is to be found in Christ Jesus. Neither is it in words only that this great Apostle teaches us this duty; he confirms it by his own example, "What things, *says he*, were gain to me, those I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, *for whom I have suffered the loss of all things*, and count them but as dung that I may gain Christ." Phil. iii. 7. In the
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the eleventh chapter of his second Epistle to the Corinthians, he gives a long catalogue of the many sufferings he had endured for Christ's sake, and at last he laid down his life with pleasure by the hands of the heathen persecutors, that he might go and enjoy his beloved master. How many thousands and thousands of others have done the same thing in the church of Christ, in all ages, for the sake of God, and to secure their salvation? How many kings and princes have sacrificed their crowns? How many rich people have renounced their treasures? How many glorious martyrs have cheerfully sacrificed their lives in the midst of torments, rather than offend God, by sin and endanger their salvation? All these had a lively faith of the great value of eternal happiness; they had a just sense of the vast importance of their salvation, they knew that nothing in this world was to be compared to it; and therefore cheerfully sacrificed all that was near or dear to them, in this life in order to secure it. Nor was it only since our Saviour's time that such examples have been seen in the world; numbers of God's holy servants even from the beginning have behaved in the same manner, whenever the question was about securing their salvation. St. Paul gives us a long catalogue of them in his Epistle to the Hebrews, and shows how the lively faith they had of the truths of eternity enabled them to undergo the severest trials, rather than hurt their souls. Some, says he, "were racked, not accepting deliverance . . . others had trials of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bonds and prisons; they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted; of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth." Heb. xi. And all this, for what end? he tells us, "*That they might find a better resurrection.*" ver. 35. that they might secure their salvation! How glorious

glorious among these examples is that of the venerable old Eleazar? he was a man of fourscore and ten years, and was commanded by a heathen prince to eat meats forbidden by the law, and was threatened with a cruel death if he refused; but "*He, says the scripture, choosing rather a most glorious death than a hateful life, went forward of his own accord to the torment: And determined not to do any unlawful thing for the love of life.*" 2 Macc. vi. 19. And when some of his friends out of compassion proposed to him privately to bring some meat that he could lawfully eat, to appear as if he had eaten the forbidden meat, and to save his life; he rejected such dissimulation with disdain, and said, "*he would rather be sent into the other world;*" giving this noble reason for his refusal: "For though, for the present time, I should be delivered from the punishments of men, yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty, neither alive nor dead." ver. 26. "And he was forthwith led to the execution . . . and when he was now ready to die with the stripes, he groaned and said, O Lord, who hast the holy knowledge, thou knowest manifestly, that whereas I might be delivered from death, I suffer grievous pains in body: but in soul am well content to suffer these things, because I fear thee." ver. 30. What a noble example of the effects of a lively sense of the great value of salvation! Glorious also is the example of the seven brothers, with their mother, who along with Eleazar suffered the most cruel torments, and encountered death with the most heroic constancy, rather than comply with the impious commands of the king and lose their souls; animating themselves in all their torments with the firm hope of a happy resurrection. "But the king of the world will raise us up, who die for his laws, *said one of them, in the resurrection of eternal life.*" 2 Macc. vii. 9. And when another was ordered to put out his tongue and hands to be cut off, he did it courageously, "and said with confidence, These I have from heaven, but for the laws
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of God I now despise them, because I hope to receive them again from him." ver. 11. The mother was particularly to be admired, who exhorted them all in these words: "I know not how you were formed in my womb, for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of every one of you. But the creator of the world, that formed the nativity of man, and that found out the origin of all, he will restore to you again in his mercy, both breath and life, as now you despise yourselves for the sake of his laws." ver. 22. And when the youngest was at last brought to the torture, the king, finding that neither threats nor promises could move him, called the mother, and counselled her to persuade her son to comply with his orders, and save his life. But she going to the young man, said to her son in her own language, "My son, have pity upon me that bare thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee and brought thee up unto this age. I beseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also; so thou shalt not fear this tormenter, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren." ver. 27. See here the esteem these saints had of their salvation! See with what cheerfulness they sacrificed all for its sake! And yet these lived some hundred years before Christ came into this world; they had not learned his heavenly doctrine, nor seen his divine example, and yet to secure to themselves a glorious resurrection, and attain salvation, they renounced *their all* in this world, and sacrificed their life in the midst of most cruel torments! What a shame must it be then, before God and his holy angels, and all these blessed martyrs, if we christians should think any thing in this life too great a sacrifice for eternal happiness!

(7.) Lastly, we must observe one thing more on this subject, as the conclusion of the whole. We have

have seen the immense value of our salvation; we have seen of what unspeakable importance it is for us to secure it; and we have seen at large in the introduction, that obedience to the commands of God is a condition absolutely necessary for obtaining it; what a powerful motive then ought this to be, to make us diligent and solicitous to obey them? Our eternal happiness depends upon it, there is no salvation without it. How immensely then is our own greatest interest concerned in complying with this duty? How strongly does our strictest duty and our highest interest combine to extort obedience from us? We are obliged in the strictest justice to obey the law of God, because he is a God of infinite power, and has the most unlimited dominion and the most absolute authority over us, as our creator, our preserver, and our last end; we are obliged to obey him from the strongest ties of gratitude, because he is our greatest and only benefactor, and out of the ardent love he bears us, has done infinitely more to make us happy, than it could ever have entered into our heart to ask of him: We are obliged to obey him for our own interest, as we have evidently seen that our only real happiness in this world, and our eternal happiness in the world to come, depends entirely upon our doing so! and is it possible we can believe these truths, and yet offend our God, or ever dare to transgress his commandments?

Q. 14. Indeed one should think it impossible that a christian who believes these truths could ever offend God; but how comes it then, that christians are so unhappy as to offend him?

A. This is owing to the power and malice of the enemies of our salvation, and to the great negligence of the greatest part of christians, in not fortifying themselves against the snares which these our spiritual enemies spread every where for our souls, by serious meditation on the truths of eternity and other holy exercises. For want of this, their faith in the above truths becomes languid and dead; and thus they be-
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come an easy prey to these enemies, and are dragged away by their delusions, like sheep to the slaughter, to the eternal ruin of their souls. Now these enemies are the devil, the world, and the flesh; on each of which we shall make some few useful observations, in the following chapter.



C H A P. VI.

Of the Enemies of our Salvation.

Q. 1. **W**HICH of these three enemies is the most dangerous for our souls?

A. Our own flesh is certainly the most dangerous of the three, both because it is a domestick enemy, which we always carry about with us, and can never fly from; and also because it is by means of it principally, that the other two get so easily any advantage over us. Now on this we must observe,

(1.) By the flesh is meant our corrupt nature, our self-love and all its passions; that bent and propensity our nature has to every thing that gratifies our sensuality and pride, in a word, our love and attachment to the enjoyments of this life. To understand which, we must remember that, as we have seen above, Chap. II. it is the great and essential duty of all mankind, arising from their very being itself, and from the end for which they were created, to love serve and obey God continually, to study in every thing to please him, and "whether they eat or drink, or *whatever else they do*, to do all to his glory," and to fulfil the will of him that made them. In the state of innocence man had no difficulty in complying with this duty; his heart was upright with God, he had him before his eyes in all he did, and it was his joy and delight to please him continually. But by sin we lost that happy union with God, and our hearts were turned away from him, so as to cleave with the most violent bent of our will to ourselves; naturally seek-

ing only our own pleasure, our own interest, and our own glory, instead of the interest, pleasure and glory of God: Hence arises that strong attachment we have to riches, to sensual delights, to the liberty of acting at our own pleasure, to the esteem and praise of the world, to curiosity, to ease, and to every thing else that is pleasing and agreeable to our nature; and this is what is meant by the flesh, or self love. Now as the whole tendency of the law of God is to recover our lost union with God, and to bring back our love and affections to him, and the doing this is diametrically opposite to the bent of self love, hence arises that immense difficulty we find in complying with the law of God; hence those violent combats when we set ourselves in earnest to obey him; our love of liberty can brook no restraint; our pride, our avarice, our love of ease and pleasure, strongly incline us to seek only such objects as are pleasing to these depraved affections; and these affections being deeply interwoven with our very frame, blind our reason, or engage it to favour themselves, and hurry us on to action for their own satisfaction, forgetful or regardless of God, and of what we owe to him. The scripture reduces all these depraved affections to three general heads, which contain all the others under them, and names them, *the lust of the eye*, *the lust of the flesh*, and *the pride of life*, which are the three great branches of self love.

(2.) The effects which this self love and its lusts produce in the soul are many and exceeding dangerous, for (1) They darken the understanding, and pervert the judgment, so as to persuade us that all those things are real goods which flatter self love and gratify its lusts, and that all those things are real evils which are contrary and disagreeable to it; they call light darkness, and darkness light; they call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet; as the scripture expresses it. By this means (2) They engage our reason itself to favour self love and all its pretensions, and make us obstinate in defending them, by numberless apparent arguments which

which reason so perverted invents in their favour. (3) They fill the imagination with innumerable ideas of vain, idle, dangerous and sinful objects, and fix them there with the most inveterate obstinacy; so as to make it exceeding difficult and painful for us to apply our thoughts with any attention to serious and spiritual things. (4) The free will itself, which naturally follows the light presented to it by the understanding, being thus beset by a darkened understanding, a depraved reason, and a sensual imagination, is in a manner dragged away by the torrent, and cleaves to all those objects which gratify self love with the most violent attachment. (5) Hence all the passions of the soul are set to work to favour self love, and defend its usurped authority; hope, fear, joy, sorrow, anger, hatred and despair, and the whole train of their attendants, are employed by turns, as occasion may require in its service, and hurry on the soul to commit numberless sins against the law of God, and in contempt of all we owe to him. (6.) The more the soul acts from these impulses of self love, the more all the above evils are increased, the understanding becomes more blinded, the reason more perverted, and the will more enslaved to the gratifications of self love and its lusts; for by this means a habit is contracted in all the powers of the soul towards evil, and the opposition this makes to salvation is inconceivable; the sinner even sports with iniquity, loves his delusion, and despises whatever could tend to undeceive him.

(3.) The holy scriptures describe this unhappy corruption of our nature by sin, in very strong terms: "This I have found, *says Solomon*, that God made man right, and he hath entangled himself with an infinity of questions." Eccles. vii. 30. All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life." 1 Jo. ii. 16. "The wickedness of man is great upon the earth, and all the thought of their heart is bent upon evil at all times. Gen. vi. 5. "For the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from

their youth." Gen. viii. 21. "They were deceived; for their own malice blinded them, and they knew not the secrets of God, nor hoped for the wages of justice, nor esteemed the honour of holy souls." Wisd. ii. 21. "For the bewitching of vanity obscureth good things, and the wandering of concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind." Wisd. iv. 12. "When they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened." Rom. i. 21. "They walk in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. Who despairing have given themselves up to lasciviousness, to the working of all uncleanness into covetousness." Ephes. iv. 17. but "Wo to you that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Is. v. 20. "Men love darkness rather than light, for their works are evil: for every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprov'd." Jo. iii. 19. "A fool worketh mischief as it were for sport." Prov. x. 23. "They leave the right way, and walk by dark ways; who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice when they have done most wicked things." Prov. ii. 13. "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots; you also may do well, when you have learned evil." Jer. xiii. 23. "The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth; but ignominy and reproach follow him. Prov. xviii. 3. for "The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed, and health shall not follow him." Prov. xxix. 1.

(4) To avoid all these evils, and overcome all the snares that our self love and its concupiscence lay for our poor souls, two things are absolutely necessary, and these are the arms by which alone we can defend

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ourselves against all its attacks. The one is by frequent meditation upon the doctrine of Jesus Christ on this subject, which we have seen above Chap. IV. §. 1. and 2. to stir up in our souls, a strong and lively faith of the vanity and worthlessness of all earthly enjoyments, and the misery they bring upon us, both here and hereafter, if we set our hearts upon them, and seek for happiness in them. But this alone will not suffice; for though we be ever so much persuaded of these truths, yet so long as our heart is tied to the bewitching pleasures of the senses, this will drag us after it to sin, in spite of all we know: now this attachment will never be broken so long as we continue to gratify self love by indulging its lusts in what is agreeable to them; nay this will always make the tie the stronger, and it is impossible to break it but by main force; and therefore the second thing required is a continual self denial and mortification; depriving our self love of those things which are agreeable and flattering to sensuality, pride or curiosity; and forcing it to undergo those things which are unpleasant and humbling to it; according to the repeated injunctions laid upon us by the word of God, as we have seen Chap. IV. above cited. And hence we see how great love our blessed Saviour has shown us, and how much we are obliged to him, for requiring so strictly of all his followers, to deny themselves, to renounce all they possess, to take up their cross, and crucify their flesh as a necessary condition of being his disciples. However disagreeable these things are to nature, yet they are absolutely necessary for obtaining eternal happiness; Jesus Christ perfectly well knows this, and therefore out of real love for our souls, and zeal for our eternal happiness, he lays these commands upon us; knowing, that if left entirely to our own choice, we would never have resolution to practise such necessary duties.

Q 2. What is to be observed of the second enemy of our salvation?

A. The second enemy of our salvation is the world, on

which we must observe (1.) That by *the world* is understood the great bulk of mankind, who live in the captivity and bondage of self love, blinded by its delusions, and slaves to its passions and concupiscences; and who not only follow all its suggestions, each by himself, but join as it were in a body, and make open profession of doing so; propagating the false maxims of self love; praising the enjoyments of sensuality as the only real goods; crying up riches and honours, and all the pleasures and conveniences of life, as the only things worthy of our notice; esteeming and honouring those who have the greatest abundance of them; despising and undervaluing those who want them; and turning every thing into a subject of mockery and ridicule, which is contrary to these their wretched opinions. And no wonder, for as the beloved disciple tells us, "They are of the world: therefore of the world they speak, and the world heareth them." 1. Jo. iv. 5. The world, then is a tumultuous multitude of people, of various characters and different tastes, who, rejecting all the maxims of the gospel of Jesus Christ, have no object in view but their own interest; no rule for their conduct, but their passions; nothing that gives them any concern, but what touches the riches, the pleasures, or the honours of this life. People who are commonly of a vain turbulent temper, and a corrupted heart, and unbounded ambition, who feed on chimeras, and are busied about trifles; people, whose greatest merit, for the most part, lies in the art of deceiving; among whom those are esteemed the wisest, who know how to make most for themselves of the misfortunes of others; and those the happiest, who can conceal with most art their own misery. A multitude, the individuals of which most commonly don't know one another, but the more they are acquainted, the more they are mutually despised. They all agree in openly professing themselves enemies of piety and devotion, and under this covert think themselves at full liberty, to deride virtue, to ridicule the most venerable practices of piety, to glory in their dissolute conduct, and boast of hav-

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ing no religion but for convenience, and through custom. Among this confused multitude there reigns an universal dissimulation, and upon this ground they rear up all that deceptive show of outward pomp and splendour, by which they impose on one another. They are lavish in bestowing their praises on their neighbour, while they despise in their heart the simplicity of him who gives ear to what they say. A thousand offers of services and protestations of friendship are made among them, even when in their heart they are the mortal enemy of the one to whom they make them. The most patent rejoicings are generally the most superficial; for though the heart be withering with affliction, one must laugh among them through artifice; for not to know how to dissimble, is an unpardonable crime in the world. Sincerity, christian simplicity, docility and piety are banished from among them, and all the maxims and opinions that reign in this society, are quite the reverse of the maxims of Jesus Christ and his gospel, and utterly subversive of salvation.

(2.) The word of God gives us a most dreadful description of this great enemy of souls. "God looked down from heaven on the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, or did seek God. All of them have gone aside, they are become unprofitable together, there is none that doth good, no not one." Ps. lii. 3. "I have seen iniquity and contradiction in the city. Day and night shall iniquity surround it upon its walls, and in the midst thereof are labour and injustice; and usury and deceit have not departed from its streets . . . their words are smoother than oil, and the same are darts." Ps. liv. 10. 22. "The sons of men, whose teeth are weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Ps. lvi. 5. "Vain are the sons of men; the sons of men are liars in the balances, that by vanity they may together deceive." Ps. lxi. 10. "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life; which is not of the father,

father, but is of the world." 1 Jo. ii. 16. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wickedness." 1 Jo. v. 19. Jesus Christ "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world; He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and *the world knew him not.*" Jo. i. 9. Neither does it know God the Father." Jo. xvii. 25. "The world cannot receive the Holy Ghost, the spirit of truth, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him." Jo. xiv. 17. It hates Jesus Christ and his faithful followers. "If the world hate you, *says he*, know that it hath hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Jo. xv. 18. "There is a generation, *says Solomon*, that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness; a generation, whose eyes are lofty, and their eye-lids lifted up on high. A generation, that for teeth hath swords, and grindeth with their jaw-teeth, to devour the needy from off the earth, and the poor from among men." Prov. xxx. 12. And David thanking God for having been protected from them, thus describes them; "Thou hast protected me from the assembly of the malignant, from the multitude of the workers of iniquity. For they have whetted their tongues like a sword, they have bent their bow, a bitter thing, to shoot in secret the undefiled. They shall shoot at him on a sudden, and will not fear; they are resolute in wickedness. They have talked of hiding snares; they have said, Who shall see them?" Ps. lxiii. 3. "They are enemies, *says St. Paul*, of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction; whose god is their belly; whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Philip. iii. 18. "Adulterers, *says St. James*, know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God." Ja. iv. 4.

(3.) Now this unhappy world, this declared enemy of Jesus Christ and of his cross, usurps a most unlimited authority, and exercises a cruel tyranny over the heart of man: And it is most amazing to see how much it is loved and followed, its favour courted and its frowns dreaded, even by good people, even by those who in their serious reflections despise it, and are ashamed in their own hearts at their base subjection to it. It promises indeed to its votaries all earthly happiness, riches, and pleasures, and honours in abundance, praise, esteem and favour of men, and every thing else that can flatter and gratify our self-love; all its maxims tend to what pleases our senses, and humours, our vanity and pride; and as our natural attachment to these things is so strong and violent, we eagerly adopt its maxims and grasp at its offers, and come into all its measures in order to obtain them. On the other hand, it threatens the greatest misery to those who stand out against it, and holds them out as objects of the utmost contempt, as fools and ideots deserving nothing but to be ridiculed and laughed at; and as there is no kind of misery so tormenting to us as contempt and derision, which strikes directly at our pride, the deepest wound our nature has received from sin; so there is nothing which more effectually undermines our virtue, and shakes our best resolutions, than this unhappy engine which the world employs to destroy us. Hence, the powerful efficacy which these common expressions have upon the heart even of the best of people, *What will the world say? What will men think of us? One must be neighbour-like while we are in the world; one would not wish to be singular, and pointed at,* and the like. Hence the immense opposition we meet with to a life of virtue and piety, from our own heart; hence our ready compliance to all the ways of the world; and the many excuses, which our reason, engaged on the side of self-love, invents and urges to sanctify this compliance in our own eyes; from decency, from charity, from the desire of doing good,

good, and other such specious pretexts, which however justifiable to a certain degree, for the most part serve only to palliate any length our self love inclines us to go in complying with the world; and hence in fine, our sollicitude to enter into all its follies; to take part in all its amusements; to adopt its maxims; to walk in its paths; to turn our back upon Jesus Christ and his holy law, and at last to ruin our own souls.

(4.) The scripture describes these deluding arts of the world in these strong colours; and first, tells us how great its hatred is against the virtuous servants of God. "The wicked loath them that are in the right way." Prov. xxix. 27. "He that walketh in the right way and feareth God, is despised by him that goeth by an infamous way." Prov. xiv. 2. "The simplicity of the just man is laughed at to scorn." Job xii. 4. Then it shows us what arts it uses to corrupt the good, and the cause of its hatred against them. "They have said, reasoning with themselves, but not right, The time of our life is short and tedious, and in the end of a man there is no remedy; and no man hath been known to have returned from hell. For we are all born of nothing, and after this we shall be as if we had never been; for the breath of our nostrils is smoke; and speech a spark to move our heart, which being put out, our body shall be ashes, and our spirit shall be poured abroad as soft air; and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist, which is driven away by the beams of the sun, and overpowered with the heat thereof; and our name in time shall be forgotten, and no man shall have any remembrance of our works. For our time is as the passing of a shadow, and there is no going back of our end; for it is fast sealed, and no man returneth. Come *therefore*, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered; let no meadow escape our riot. Let

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none of us go without his part in luxury; let us every where leave tokens of joy, for this is our portion, and this our lot." Wisd. ii. 1. Would you not think the Holy Ghost intended in this passage to describe not only the substance of what the world says to entice poor souls to its service, but even the very words of the present generation? And Oh! how many are deluded to their eternal ruin by such enticing allurements? for "evil communications corrupt good manners" 1 Cor. xv. 33. But if the just stand firm to their duty, and are proof against this battery, see how the world shifts its ground and attacks them with other weapons, without respect of persons. "Let us oppress the poor just man, and not spare the widow, nor honour the ancient grey hairs of the aged. Let our strength be the law of justice, for that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth. Let us therefore lie in wait for the just, *because he is not for our turn*, and he is contrary to our doings, and upbraideth us with transgressions of the law, and divulgeth against us the sins of our way of life. He boasteth that he hath the knowledge of God, and calleth himself the son of God. He is become a censorer of our thoughts. He is grievous unto us even to behold; for his life is not like other mens, and his ways are very different. We are esteemed by him as triflers, and he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness. Let us see then if his words be true, and let us prove what shall happen to him, and we shall know what his end shall be . . . Let us examine him *by outrages and tortures*, that we may know his meekness and try his patience . . . These things they thought, and were deceived, for their malice blinded them." Wisd. ii. 10. David also describes this conduct of the worldly man, and the fatal success he too often has against good people, in these words, "His mouth is full of cursing and of bitterness, and of deceit: under his tongue are labour and sorrow. He sitteth in ambush with the rich in private places, that he may kill the innocent. His

his eyes are upon the poor man : he lieth in wait in secret, like a lion in his den. He lieth in ambush that he may catch the poor man, *to catch the poor whilst he draweth him to him.* In his net he will bring him down, he will crouch and fall, when he shall have power over the poor." Psa. ix. x. 7.

(5.) Now it is manifest that the whole force of these engines which the world uses, to draw us from our duty and the service of God, is owing entirely to our own self-love, and the slavish attachment we have to worldly enjoyments ; for if we had no attachment to the riches and pleasures of life, if we were truly humble of heart like our Lord and master, if we were lovers of the cross of Christ, as all his servants ought to be, the world with all its engines could make no impression on us ; we would laugh at its deluding promises, and despise its empty threats. Hence the most effectual remedy against all its snares, is to nourish in our hearts a lively faith of the truths of eternity, for " This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." 1 Jo. v. 4. and by the constant exercise of self-denial and mortification, to " take off our affections from things below, and set them on the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Col. iii. 1. And in this again we see, with how much reason our blessed Saviour so strictly requires the practice of self-denial from all his followers. Besides which the scripture gives us several very important injunctions in this matter. (1.) *To fly from the world*, as far as our circumstances can allow, and never take part in its alluring amusements ; thus, " My son, if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they say, Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us lay snares for the innocent without cause ; let us swallow him up alive like hell, and whole as one that goeth down to the pit ; we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoils. Cast in thy lot with us, let us all have one purse. My son, walk not thou with them, restrain thy foot from their paths, for their feet

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feet run to evil." Prov. i. 10. "Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee; flee from it, pass not by it, go aside and forsake it." Prov. iv. 14. (2.) *Never to court the favour of the world*, nor do the least thing contrary to our duty, or that may even endanger our soul, in order to please it. "Do I seek to please men? *says the apostle St. Paul*; if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Gal. i. 10. "They have not called upon God; there have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear: for God hath scattered the bones of them that please men: they have been confounded, because God hath despised them." Psa. lii. 6. "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world; if any man loves the world, the charity of the father is not in him." 1 Jo. ii. 15. "Whosoever will be a friend of this world, becomes an enemy of God." Ja. ii. 4. (3.) *Never to fear the world*, nor any of its evils, but to oppose to the base fear of the world the wholesome fear of the great God. "I say to you, my friends, (*these are the words of Jesus Christ to his faithful followers*) Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will shew you whom you shall fear: fear ye him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea I say to you, fear him." Luke xii. 4. And God himself by his prophet, "Hearken to me, *says he*, you that know what is just; my people, who have my law in your heart; fear ye not the reproach of men, and be not afraid of their blasphemies; for the worm shall eat them up as a garment, and the moth shall consume them as wool; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my justice from generation to generation." Isa. li. 7. "And thou, O Son of man, fear not, neither be thou afraid of their words, for thou art among unbelievers and destroyers, and thou dwellest with scorpions. Fear not their words, neither be thou dismayed at their looks; for they are a provoking house." Ezek. ii. 6. (4.) *To despise the opinion*

of the world, and whatever they may think or say about us : but to study only to be agreeable to God.

“ I am not troubled, *says Jeremiah to God*, following thee my pastor, and I have not desired the day of man ; thou knowest it ; that which went out of my lips, hath been right in thy sight.” Jer. xvii. 16.

“ With me, *says St. Paul*, it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man’s day . . . but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” 1 Cor. iv. 3. “ Wo to you, when men shall bless you, for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets.” Luke vi. 26. “ And the Lord said, Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation ? and to what are they like ? They are like to children sitting in the market place, and speaking one to another, and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced ; we have mourned, and you have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking water ; and you say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking ; and you say, Behold a man that is a glutton and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners ; and wisdom is justified by all her children.” Luke vii. 31. So malicious is the world, that it will censure and blame whatever one does ; and therefore its judgments deserve no regard, as being founded in caprice, and not in merit. They are also variable and inconstant, and never to be depended upon ; the same world that received Jesus Christ into Jerusalem as a great prophet, with Hosannas and acclamations, a few days after cried out, *crucify him, crucify him*, as an infamous malefactor. How unworthy then of our regard are the judgments of the world ! (5.) *By no means to imitate the world*, nor conform ourselves to its customs and ways. See above Chap. IV. § 2. (6.) *To glory in standing up for the cause of God*, and even rejoice in having any thing to suffer from the world on that account. “ And if also you suffer any thing for justice sake, blessed are ye. And be not afraid of their terror, and be not troubled : but sanctify the
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Lord Christ in your hearts, being ready always to satisfy every one that asketh you a reason of that hope that is in you." 1 Pet. iii. 14. "Arise, *says God to his prophet*, arise and speak to them all that I command thee. Be not afraid of their presence, for I will make thee not to be afraid of their countenance." Jer. i. 17.

Q. 3. What is to be observed of the third enemy of our salvation?

A. The third enemy of our salvation is the devil, concerning whom the following particulars are to be known. (1.) The account which the scriptures give of himself, his character and dispositions. "Our wrestling, *says St. Paul*, is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places." Eph. vi. 12. And in other places of scripture the devil, who is the chief of these spirits of darkness, is called the *prince of this world*, and of him it is said, "There is no power upon earth that can be compared with him, who was made to fear no one. He beholdeth every high thing, and is king over all the children of pride." Job. xli. 24. "By the envy of the devil, death came into the world." Wisd. ii. 24. For "He was a murderer from the beginning, and he abode not in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of lies." Jo. viii. 44. He has an implacable hatred at men, and is continually seeking to ruin them; "Behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Luke xxii. 31. for "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. v. 8. And thence arise innumerable woes to man. "Wo to the earth and to the sea, because the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." Rev. xii. 12. And when he gets any soul into his power, he keeps them captive, and drags them on at his will to all sin. 2 Tim.

ii. 26. " You were dead in your offences and sins, wherein, in time past, you walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief." Eph. ii. 1.

(2.) Concerning the nature of his temptations we are told, (1.) That he blinds the understanding, and makes us forget or not advert to the great truths of eternity. " The God of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv. 4. To effectuate this, he gives them an aversion at hearing the word of God, according to what our Saviour says to the Jews, " You are of your father the devil, and the desire of your father you will do He that is of God, heareth the words of God ; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God." Jo. viii. 44. 47. And when at any time they do hear them, " The devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved." Luke viii. 12. (2.) As he is a liar from the beginning, he chiefly makes use of lies and falsehoods to deceive and ensnare us ; sometimes by himself, and sometimes by means of wicked men, whom he uses as his apostles ; for this purpose, " False apostles, says *St. Paul*, are deceitful workmen, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ: and no wonder, for Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light." 2 Cor. xi. 13. Sometimes he makes use of the word of God itself, to gild over his snares with an appearance of piety, as he did to Jesus Christ himself, when he tempted him in the wilderness. See Luke iv. 5. Sometimes he deceives by lying signs and wonders, as will chiefly be the case towards the end of the world, when his delusions this way will be " so great as to deceive, if possible, even the elect." Mat. xxiv. 24. 2 Thess. ii. 9. 10. But we are told, (3.) That the main source of the strength of his temptations, and of the fatal advantage he too, too

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often gets over us, is our own self-love, our passions and attachments to the things of this world; and hence his attacks are always pointed at this quarter, by proposing some worldly good to engage our self-love on his side, or threatening some temporal evil to deter us. Thus he attacked our first parents in Paradise, by what was flattering to pride; *you shall be as gods*, said he, Gen. iii. 5. He induced David to number his people by vanity, "And Satan rose up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel." 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Through the love of money, "The devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ." Jo. xiii. 2. Through the same means, "Satan tempted the heart of Ananias and Saphira, to lie to the Holy Ghost, and by fraud to keep part of the price of their lands." Acts v. 3. And when he tempted Christ himself, he attacked him by the same allurements, first of pleasure, then of vain glory, and lastly of avarice. And indeed it is evident, that were it not for our self-love, he could have no handle to attack us, nor would any of his temptations be able to make any impression upon us: for if we neither desired those things which are flattering to self-love, nor feared what are contrary to it, it is plain that neither promises of the one, nor threats of the other could ever be able to move us from our duty. And therefore we see that the principal defence against all his temptations, and what would at once enervate them entirely, is to conquer our self-love in all its branches by a lively faith and continual mortification. But,

(3) As we are so very deficient in applying this radical cure, the scripture points out several others, which indeed contain in a great measure the two just mentioned, and are a great help to our weakness and deficiency in them. And (1.) *Sobriety or temperance*, by which, if we have not resolution to mortify our self love entirely, we keep it at least within the bounds of moderation, and never allow it to drag us to any excess. (2.) *Watching*, by a continual guard over our heart to observe the first motion of any temptation,

and reject it entirely, never dallying with it, nor allowing our thought to dwell upon it, but doing with it as we would do with a spark of fire that should fall upon our clothes, shake it off immediately. "Blessed is the man that shall take these little ones (*these beginnings of temptations*) and dash them against the rock." Ps. cxxxvi. 9. by a speedy recourse to the rock which is Christ, that is by flying to him with (3) *a strong faith and confidence in God*, distrusting ourselves as unable to do any good without him, and imploring his assistance by humble and fervent prayer, for *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble*, Ja. iv. 6. (4) *A firm and unwearied resistance* against the enemy, though his attacks should continue ever so long; never yielding, no not in the smallest degree, to his suggestions, not even in the most trifling matters.

(4.) Of all these remedies the scripture speaks as follows: "Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In all things taking the *shield of faith*, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and take unto you the *helmet of salvation*, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, by *all prayer and supplication* praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same *watching with all instance*." Ephes. vi. 13. "Be subject to God; but *resist the devil*, and he will fly from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Ja. iv. 7. "Be you *humble* therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation, *casting all your care upon him*, for he hath care of you. Be *jeber and wltch*, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour, whom *resist ye, strong in faith*." i. Pet. v. 6. "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temp-

temptation." Mat. xxvi. 41. "He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing." Ecclef. vii. 19. for "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little." Ecclef. xix. 1.

Q. 4. Is there any thing else to be observed, in order to fortify us against the assaults of our spiritual enemies?

A. There is yet another caution to be observed with the utmost attention; because it is of such necessity that all the rest will be of very little service without it; and that is, carefully to fly from, and avoid all the dangerous occasions of sin. On this most important subject the following things are to be considered;

(1.) By the occasions of sin, are meant those circumstances, in which, when a man is placed, he is easily led away by them to commit sin, so that if he had not been exposed to that danger, he would not have committed it. Thus, for example, keeping an inn, is a dangerous occasion of sin to a drunkard; in so much that it will be merely impossible for him to reclaim himself from that vice, while he continues in that business. So also gaming, besides its own intrinsic evil, exposes a man to the danger of anger, and cursing, and swearing; immodest discourses, to impure thoughts and desires; the company and conversation of unbelievers, to doubts concerning some points of our holy faith; reading bad books, to take pleasure in, or consent to, the evil they contain; the company and familiarity of those who curse and swear, to speak in the same diabolical dialect; and so on of other such circumstances, examples of which are without number. Hence these dangerous occasions are called in scripture language, *the evil way, the road to sin, the way of iniquity*; for as the road, or way to any place, leads those who walk in it to that place, so those dangerous occasions lead those who walk in them to wickedness and sin. Thus David says, "Remove from me the way of iniquity." Ps. cxviii. 29. "I have restrained my feet from every evil

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evil way, that I may keep thy words." v. 101. "I have hated every way of iniquity." v. 104. and the wise man, "Go not, *says he*, in the way of ruin, and thou shalt not stumble against the stones." Eccl. xxxii. 25.

(2.) How difficult it is, or rather how morally impossible, to expose one's self to these dangerous occasions, and not to be led away by them to sin, is manifest from experience itself. For, when any thing agreeable or disagreeable to our nature is actually present with us, it has a much greater force to excite our passions for, or against it, than when it is absent; and we find it infinitely more difficult to restrain these passions in presence of the object that excites them, than when it is at a distance from us. A person that is moderately hungry feels the craving of his appetite, but he can easily bear with it; but set some pleasant and savoury meat before him, the sight and smell of it will raise his appetite to such a degree, that it will scarce be in his power to refrain from it. Just so, when one is in the dangerous occasion of sin by its presence, it acts so strongly upon the senses and imagination, and raises such a commotion in the sensual appetite, as easily drags away the will to consent to those sins which it proposes. Suppose a person loses his money at cards; he is vexed at his misfortune, he abhors his folly, he renounces that delusive amusement, and determines never to touch a card more; If he keeps away from the occasion, he will keep his resolution; but let him frequent the company of those who play, though at first only as a spectator, yet he will soon find his resolution to fail; his imagination will flatter him with the hopes of better success, the inticements of his companions to try his fortune again will bend him to a compliance, or their derision and jeers will completely unman him. How many instances are there of drunkards, who, if kept entirely from liquor, will scarce ever think about it; but let them go into company and take a glass or two, and it will not be in their power to restrain themselves from excess? A person

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person may be very honest, and even have an abhorrence of all injustice; but let him be in some straits, and have an opportunity of committing fraud with impunity, and who would answer for his honesty? hence the common proverb, that *occasion makes the thief*. How many are to be found who never think of speaking obscene words when out of bad company? yet if in company with those who talk in that strain, are dragged away with the torrent, and speak as bad as they. From these, and numbers of such cases it plainly appears, that the outward occasions of sin are the strongest means which the devil has of tempting us; his internal suggestions are in most cases too weak, or of no effect at all without the other; and this he well knowing, procures all he can to lead people into dangerous occasions, and to bring the objects that excite to sin before their eyes, as the most effectual way to ruin them. Thus even with our blessed Saviour himself, after he had in vain tried to deceive him by other means, "He took him up into a very high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said, All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and adore me." Mat. iv. 8. He could easily have told him in the desert; that he had all these kingdoms in his power, and would give them to him; but he knew that showing them before his eyes would make a much deeper impression upon him, and raise a keener desire of getting them, than any thing he could say in words only. What he did then to Jesus Christ, he continues daily to do to men; and sad experience shows with how fatal success.

(3.) The sacred scripture declares us the same truth, and assures us how impossible it is for one to expose himself to these occasions, and not be overcome by them. "Can a man hide fire in his bosom, *says Solomon*, and his garments not burnt? or can he walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" Prov. vi. 27. "He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with it; and he that hath fellowship with the proud, shall put on pride." Eccles. xiii. 1. Nay, the same divine oracles

oracles declare, that "He that loveth danger shall perish in it." Ecclus. iii. 27. And how strongly is this confirmed by the most striking examples? Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, passing through the country of Sichem, from a womanish curiosity "went out to see the women of that country." Gen. xxxiv. and she met with dangerous company, lost her honour, and was ravished. David by looking at a beautiful woman, though at a little distance from him, such a violent temptation was excited in his mind, that it hurried him on to two grievous sins of adultery and murder. Solomon with all his wisdom was not proof against the seduction of dangerous company; "He loved many strange women . . . and his heart was turned away by them to follow strange Gods . . . and he worshipped idols." 3 Kings xi. 1. 4. Sampson with all his strength fell by the same means, and lost both his liberty and life. Eve in her innocency, by entertaining a dangerous conversation, was seduced from her duty to commit a grievous sin, which brought ruin and misery on all her posterity; and St. Peter by exposing himself to dangerous company, was induced to deny his master, and by oaths and imprecations to protest he did not know him! How dangerous then is it to expose one's self to the occasion of sin! "Evil communications corrupt good manners." 1 Cor. xv. 33.

(4.) Hence we are commanded in the strongest manner to avoid all such occasions, and to fly from them, both by the law of nature, which strictly obliges every one to avoid exposing himself to the danger of offending God, and of ruining his own soul, and also by the express law of God, both in the old and new testament. Thus when God forbade our first parents to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, he at the same time forbade them much as to touch it, Gen. iii. 3. lest their touching it should prove an incitement to their eating of it. So also when he instituted the days of unleavened bread, he not only forbade his people to eat leavened bread

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bread during those days under pain of death, but he would not allow them so much as to have it in their houses, lest it should prove an occasion to their eating it. "Seven days, *says he*, there shall not be found any leaven in your houses; he that shall eat leavened bread, his soul shall perish out of the assembly of Israel." *Exod. xii. 19.* In like manner Almighty God well knowing that the wicked inhabitants of the land of Canaan, if left among his people, would by their bad example prove their ruin, he prohibited them in the strictest manner to have any kind of fellowship or communication with them, or even to allow them to dwell in the land with them, and thus he speaks: "I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands, and will drive them out from before you; thou shalt not enter into league with them, nor with their gods; let them not dwell in thy land, lest perhaps they make thee sin against me, if thou serve their gods, which *undoubtedly will be a scandal to thee.*" *Exod. xxiii. 31.* "Beware thou never join in friendship with the inhabitants of that land, which may be thy ruin; but destroy their altars, break their statues, and cut down their groves. . . . Make no covenant with the men of these countries; lest when they have committed fornication with their gods, and have adored their idols, some one call thee to eat of the things sacrificed." *Exod. xxxiv. 12.* "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them. Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son, *for she will turn away thy son from following me.* . . . Their graven things thou shalt burn with fire, thou shalt not covet the silver and gold of which they are made, neither shalt thou take to thee any thing thereof, *lest thou offend,* because it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither shalt thou bring any thing of the idol into thy house, *lest thou become an anathema,* like it. Thou shalt detest it as dung, and shalt utterly abhor it as uncleanness and filth, because it is an anathema." *Deut. vii. 3. 25.* "Be not delighted, *says Salomon,*
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in the paths of the wicked ; neither let the way of evil men please thee. Flee from it ; pass not by it ; go aside and forsake it." Prov. iv. 14. In the gospel, our blessed Saviour is particularly strong upon this subject. " If thy right eye, *says he*, cause thee to offend, pluck it out and cast it from thee, for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, than that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off and cast it from thee ; for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, than that the whole body should go into hell." Mat. v. 29. Where observe, that he does not say, If thy eye or thy hand be an occasion of sin to you, *but your eye, bind your hand* : but *Pluck out thy eye, cut off thy hand* ; there is no dallying with these dangerous occasions, nothing but an entire separation can save from perishing in hell fire ; for " He that loves the danger, *shall perish in it*." Ecclus. iii. 27. See more below, Chap. VII. Q. 25. on avoiding the dangerous occasions of hurting our faith.

(5.) No man must here trust to the strength of his own resolution, or expose himself to dangerous occasions, from the persuasion that he is firmly determined never to be led astray by them. However strong his resolution be at present, when out of the occasion, what security can he have that he will not be unmanned by its presence ? Is he stronger than Sampson, more pious than David, wiser than Solomon, or more faithful than Peter ? They fell by being exposed to the occasions ; what can he expect ? It is but the argument of a fool to say, *At present when I am in no danger, I am fully resolved not to commit the sin ; therefore, when in the danger, and when the imagination is warmed, and the passions are raised by its presence, my resolution will persevere in its full strength and vigour*. " A wise man, *says the scripture*, feareth and declineth from evil ; the fool leapeth over, and is confident." Prov. xiv. 16. This self confidence was the principal cause of St. Peter's fall

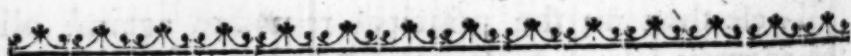
fall, "Though all should be scandalized at thee, *said he to his blessed master*, yet will not I." And "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." He was not then in the occasion; but a little after, when exposed to it, how shamefully did his courage fail him! How basely did he deny his master! Neither let any one say, that he trusts in the assistance of God who will preserve him; for though we may confidently trust in God, and he will never fail to protect us in those dangers to which we are necessarily exposed in the course of doing our duty, or which his divine providence permits to come upon us, yet we have no reason to expect such protection, when we voluntarily expose ourselves to the danger without a cause; nay, such pretended confidence in God is nothing but presumption and a tempting of God; it is therefore highly criminal; it is transgressing his express command, which orders us to fly from the danger, to separate ourselves from it, though as dear to us as a hand or an eye, and is a provoking him to leave us to ourselves, in punishment of our folly; yea, so far is he from promising any assistance to us in such cases, that he expressly declares, "*He that loves danger shall perish in it*; he is not content with saying, *shall fall in it*, but positively assures us, *he shall perish in it*. Where then are the grounds for hoping for his assistance, when by exposing ourselves to the danger, we provoke his indignation, and insult him?

These then are the principal remedies against all the enemies of our souls; and it is by a faithful use of them that we may confidently expect that the divine assistance will never be wanting to us; and the more diligent we are in doing our part, the more firmly may we hope for God's protection, and such an abundant supply of his grace as will enable us effectually to keep his holy commandments, and attain our eternal salvation. What those duties are, which his holy law lays upon us, we shall now proceed to explain.

Q. 5. Is there any other general observation to
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be made on the commands, before we begin the explication of each in particular?

A. Any controversial point about the commands in general, as the possibility of keeping them, the manner of dividing them into two tables, or the like, has been fully examined in the *Sincere Christian*. It remains here only to remember that each command contains two classes of duties, one of those things which we are commanded to practise; the other of those from which we are commanded to abstain: the former all called positive duties, the other negative; the former contains things commanded, the other things forbidden; the things commanded are acts of various virtues; the things forbidden, are the opposite vices; positive duties, or the acts of virtues, oblige us to their observance only, in those times and circumstances where the law requires them to be performed; negative commands, which enjoin us to abstain from evil, oblige us at all times and in all circumstances, as it can never be lawful to do any thing which the law of God forbids. Thus though the law commands us to honour our parents, yet this does not require us to be continually employed in actually showing them respect, and honouring them; but the same law forbids us to dishonour them, and this obliges us never, in any time or on any occasion, to show them disrespect or disregard. The same is to be observed in all the other commandments.



CHAP. VII.

On the First Commandment.

Q. 1. **W**Hat is the first commandment?

A. "Thou shalt have no strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is heaven above,

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above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth : thou shalt not adore them nor serve them : I am the Lord thy God, mighty and jealous." *Exod. xx. 3.*

Q. 2. What is the general end or purport of this first command ?

A. It is to direct us in that supreme worship and adoration which we owe to God, as a Being of infinite perfection, our first beginning, our last end, and our sovereign Lord. This worship consists in believing God to be what he is, and in adhering to him with all the powers of our soul : and this is done by the virtues of faith, hope, charity, and religion. To honour, adore or worship God as he deserves, we must (1.) Conceive a just idea of his excellency ; for to think of him below what he deserves, is to dishonour him. (2.) We must put a confidence in him, proportionable to his abilities and will to help us ; for to distrust him, implies a want of esteem for him. (3.) We must have an affection and love for him suitable to his merits ; for indifference, and much more aversion, are signs of contempt ; and (4.) We must give proof of our esteem and attachment to him by every suitable external demonstration of it, and by serving him. Now as God is a Being of infinite excellency and infinite perfection, we must believe him to be such, and esteem him above all things ; and this we do by faith. As he is infinitely powerful and able to help us in all our needs, has an infinite love for us, and is most desirous of our real good, and at the same time has engaged his fidelity by repeated promises to befriend us ; we ought therefore to have an unbounded confidence in him ; and this is the virtue of hope. As he is infinitely beautiful and lovely in himself, and infinitely good to us, being our first beginning, our last end, our only happiness, on whom we have a total dependence for our very being itself, and for all we have or need, we ought therefore to love him above all things ; and this is divine charity. Finally, as he is our sovereign Lord,

and has the most absolute and unlimited power and dominion over us, we ought therefore to render him every possible homage, obedience, and service both of soul and body, and this we do by the virtue of religion. When these holy virtues are seated in our soul, and produce the suitable dispositions there, we worship and *adore God in spirit*; and when our whole outward behaviour flows from, and corresponds with these inward dispositions of the soul, then we *adore God in truth*.

Q. 3. What then is properly commanded by this first commandment?

A. To worship and adore God alone, by faith, hope, charity, and religion. The three first of these virtues, to wit, faith, hope, and charity, or love of God, are called divine virtues, because they tend to unite the soul immediately with God; and of them the scripture says, "Ye that fear the Lord, *believe him*, and your reward shall not be made void. Ye that fear the Lord, *hope in him*, and mercy shall come to you for your delight. Ye that fear the Lord, *love him*, and your hearts shall be enlightened." Eccclus. ii. 8.

Q. 4. What is forbidden by the first command?

A. All those vices which are contrary to these virtues.

§ 1. Of Divine Faith.

Q. 5. What is divine faith?

A. Faith is a virtue by which we firmly believe God to be what he is, and by which we also believe all those sacred truths which he has revealed to mankind, precisely upon the authority of his word, and because he has revealed them.

Q. 6. How do we know what those truths are which God has revealed?

A. By the testimony of his holy church; which he has appointed to be the depository of these truths, and the infallible guardian and preserver of them, so long as the world shall endure; as we have seen
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and proved at large in *The sincere Christian instructed*.
Chap. XI.

Q. 7. How do we honour and worship God by faith?

A. Because when we firmly believe all those sacred truths, which God has revealed, and taught us by his holy church, even though we neither see nor comprehend them, but merely *because he has revealed them*; by this we do homage to his infinite wisdom and veracity, and prefer his word before our own proud judgment, our senses, our reason, and every other consideration; all which we most humbly subject to his divine authority.

Q. 8. Are we strictly obliged [to believe whatever God has revealed?

A. Most undoubtedly; both because it would be the highest insult to his infinite wisdom and veracity to refuse to believe what he says, and because he expressly requires this homage from us, and makes our believing in him by faith, a necessary condition of salvation; as we have also seen in the *Sincere Christian*, Chap. X. from repeated testimonies of his holy scripture.

Q. 9. But how can we believe what we neither see nor understand?

A. Properly speaking, it is only in things which we neither see nor understand, that we *do believe*; for if we see any thing with our eyes, and examine it by our other senses, the knowledge we acquire of it by this means, is not faith, but *experience*. If we come to the knowledge of any thing by a train of arguments drawn from known principles, or by comparing the known properties, relations, and connections of things together, the knowledge we acquire by this means is not faith, but *reason* and *demonstration*. But faith or belief, strictly speaking, embraces only the knowledge we acquire of things from the testimony of others, even though we never saw them with our eyes, or even cannot comprehend *how*, or *why* they should be, for want of a sufficient information

tion about them. And if those who give the testimony are people of knowledge and veracity, we can have no well grounded difficulty in believing what they affirm, though we neither see nor comprehend what they tell us.

Q. 10. Can this be shown by any examples?

A. Examples of this are every day before our eyes. A country person looks up to the heavens, and his senses represent to him there the moon about three foot broad, and the stars a great deal less than the moon. He speaks of this to a learned man, and he tells him, that these things are quite different from what he thinks them to be; that the moon is a very large body, many hundred miles broad; and that the stars are a great many times larger than the moon; and he assures him that this can be demonstrated by the strictest reasoning, and that the small appearance they make to his eyes, is owing only to the great distance they are at from us. To the authority of this learned man the country person acquiesces, and believes what the other says, even though *contrary* to what he sees, because he knows him to be a learned and honest man, who, having studied these things, must know them better than he, and who can have no motive to deceive him. So also learners of all arts and sciences must take many things at first upon their master's word, and believe many things which they neither see nor understand, and yet have no difficulty in doing so, on the authority of their master who declares them. Now if this be the case, in daily instances, about the things of this world, where the testimonies are only of men; how much more ought it to take place concerning the things of the other world, and where it is God himself who declares them? for as the scripture says, "Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us. But the things that are in heaven, who shall search?" Wisd ix. 16. It is plain we can never discover the things that are in heaven,

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either by reason or experience, and that except God Almighty should condescend to reveal them to us, we must eternally remain ignorant of them, "No man, *says Jesus Christ*, knoweth who the son is but the father : and who the father is but the son, and *he to whom the son will reveal him.*" Luke x. 22. If therefore God has been pleased to discover any of these heavenly truths to mankind, who can refuse to believe them upon his word, even though we do not understand them? for, "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater." 1 Jo. v. 9. Can we be surpris'd that we should not understand spiritual things, when there are thousands of bodily things before our eyes every day, which we cannot comprehend? is it a matter of wonder that our finite understandings should not be able to see what belongs to an infinite God? or penetrate into the views and reasons of an all-wise being? or shall we, poor weak creatures, presume to decide what is possible for our Almighty Creator to do or not to do? or what is becoming and fitting his infinite wisdom to do? hear how the scripture confounds our pride, if we do so. "I have seen, *says Solomon*, the trouble which God hath given the sons of men, to be exercised in it. He hath made *all things good in their time*, and hath delivered the world to their consideration, so that *man cannot find out the work which God hath made*, from the beginning to the end." Eccles. iii. 10. "And I applied my heart to know wisdom . . . and I understood that *man can find no reason*, of all those works of God, that are done under the sun : and the more he shall labour to seek, so much the less shall he find; yea, though the wise man should say, that he knoweth it, he shall not be able to find it." Eccles. viii. 16. 17.

But to understand this matter to the bottom, we must observe, that there are three things which may be considered in any object of our knowledge; its existence itself, the manner how it exists, and the reason why it exists. Now it is plain, that we may know some or one or other of these three things, without know-

knowing them all. We know that wheat sown in the earth grows up to a new crop with great increase; this fact we know for certain; the reason *why* this is so, we also know, to wit, to supply food for man; but the manner *how* it is so, of this we are wholly ignorant. If one takes any medicine, it produces certain effects in his body; that the medicine he takes has the virtue of producing these effects, is a fact we know from experience; *why* it has this effect, is also manifest, namely, to contribute to the health of man; but the manner *how* it comes to have this effect, all the physicians of the world can never explain. From time to time comets are seen in the heavens, and by the observations of the learned it appears, that they run in a course quite different from the other heavenly bodies, and with an immense velocity; That comets exist, we know for certain; but in what *manner* they run such a singular course, or *why* they do so, or to what *purpose* they serve at all, who can pretend to say? If therefore even in things before our eyes, though we are certain of their existence, yet we are very often ignorant both of the *why* and of the *how*; is it to be wondered that we be ignorant of this in things belonging to heaven and to eternity? It is manifest that as we can never know the existence of the things of God, but by revelation from him; much less can we know either the reason *why*, or the manner *how* they are so, unless he discovers it to us; if therefore he is pleased to reveal to us that such and such things are so and so, without telling us the *why* or the *how*, shall we have any difficulty to believe the great God's word, when he tells us a part, because forsooth he does not think fit to tell us the whole? He has revealed to us, that in the divine nature, which is individually *one*, there are three persons *really distinct*. The manner *how* this should be so, we cannot understand, as we do not understand how a dose of opium, for example, makes a person sleep; and God has not thought fit to explain the manner of this mystery to us; shall we therefore refuse to believe the

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the fact which he has revealed, because he judges proper not to tell us the manner? This, it is evident, would be the height of extravagance. Now the existence of any thing revealed, without knowledge of the manner of its existence, is properly speaking the object of faith; for if we knew the manner of its existence, and saw its intrinsic evidence, it would be demonstration and reason, but no more faith. And therefore the whole virtue and merit of faith consists in our believing, that revealed truths are really so as revelation teaches, though we cannot see the manner *how* they are so; yea, though in appearance they should seem contrary to our ideas of things, or to our reason; which being conversant only about created and natural objects, must have all its ideas exceedingly different from what belongs to such as are uncreated and supernatural.

Q. 11. What idea does the scripture give of the nature of divine faith?

A. (1.) It tells us plainly that at present we know heavenly things but darkly and in part, and therefore must believe many things upon the word of Jesus Christ, who is our master; and not expect to see them clearly till we be in another world. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away We see *now* through a glass in a dark manner; but *then* face to face; *now* I know in part, but *then* I shall know even as I am known."

1 Cor. xiii. 9. "We have also the more firm prophetic word, whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that *shineth in a dark place*, until the *day dawn*, and the *day star* arise in your hearts." 2 Pet. i. 19. And therefore in this life "we walk by faith, and not by sight." 2 Cor. v. 7.

(2.) That "faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that are not seen." Heb. xi. 1. *The evidence*, he says, *of things that are not seen*; because though it be impossible for us to see with our eyes, or comprehend with our reason the great truths of eternity, so that we can never come to know

know them but by revelation ; yet the evidence we have of their existence from revelation, by means of faith, is so great, that it gives us the most absolute certainty of them ; as much and more than the evidence either from our senses or reason can do, in what properly belongs to their examination. So that according to St. Paul, *things not seen* are only the proper objects of our faith.

(3.) That all the merit of faith arises from this, that we believe upon the authority of God's word alone, what we neither see nor understand. That faith is a virtue most acceptable to God, and will be amply rewarded by him, is a fundamental article of the christian religion. " God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten son ; that whosoever *believeth in him* may not perish, but may have *life everlasting*." Jo. iii. 16. " My sheep, *says Jesus Christ*, hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me : and I give them eternal life, and they shall not perish for ever." Jo. x. 27. Now what makes it thus acceptable to God, is precisely this, that we do supreme homage to his infinite veracity by believing what he says, merely because he says it, though we neither see nor understand it ; thus, when St. Thomas professed his faith in Christ, upon seeing the marks of the nails in his hands and feet, and the wound in his side, our Saviour replied, " Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed ; *blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed*." Jo. xx. 29. " You shall greatly rejoice, *says St. Peter*, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful, that the trial of your faith, much more precious than gold, which is tried by the fire, may be found unto praise, and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ ; whom, *having not seen*, you love ; in whom also now, *though you see him not*, you believe, and believing you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, and glorified ; receiving *the end of your faith*, even the salvation of your souls." 1 Pet. i. 6. Hence we see that divine faith is not an act of the understanding alone, which

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is necessitated to believe any truth which is demonstrated to it by its own internal evidence, but it is an act of the free will as well as of the understanding, which makes it free and voluntary, and on that account it is meritorious before God, through the grace of Christ.

(4.) That divine faith is a gift of God, which we can never attain by our own natural strength alone, without the assistance of God's grace. This our Saviour declares in these words: "No man can come to me, except the father, who hath sent me, draw him;" to wit, not by compulsion, nor by laying the free will under any necessity, but by the strong and sweet motions of his heavenly grace; and therefore he adds a little after, "No man can come to me, unless *it be given him by my father.*" Jo. vi. 44. 66. And he pronounces St. Peter blessed, when he made profession of his faith in Christ, as being the Son of God, because he had received this grace from God. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my father, who is in heaven." Mat. xvi. 17. St. Paul also declares this truth, saying, "By grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, for *it is the gift of God.*" Eph. ii. 8. And again, "To you *it is given* for Christ not only *to believe in him*, but also to suffer for his sake." Phil. i. 29. Now the reason of this is, because the most part of the truths of faith surpass the natural lights of our understanding, and many of them appear even contrary to our reason; and although the motives of credibility render them highly credible, yet they are not in themselves evident, but obscure; on this account the understanding finds great difficulty to believe them; it being a pain to our proud judgment to believe what it cannot comprehend, because it contains a tacit acknowledgement of our own weakness; and therefore it requires a free act of the will to determine the understanding to do it. Besides, the will itself is very often averted from believing the truths of faith, by her passions, by pre-judices

judices of education, by the spirit of party, by worldly interest, by human respects, and other such obstacles ; which perverting the will, make the difficulties of the understanding appear still more and more insuperable. For it must be remembered, that, though the understanding cannot refuse its assent to truths which are evident in themselves, or evidently demonstrated by reason, yet in those truths which are obscure in themselves, and especially if they be above reason, and in appearance against reason, as supernatural truths generally are, and the proof of their existence be drawn only from authority, the will has a great sway with the understanding, and very much influences it either to believe or reject them. It is by means of the above difficulties, both on the part of the understanding and of the will, that " The God of this world, *as Paul expresses it*, blinds the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv. 4. These difficulties are like so many strong holds, in which the pride of the heart of man is fortified, and refuses to submit the idol of its own judgment to the divine authority ; and if left to itself, would be more inclined to call in question the revelation itself, on account of the incomprehensibility of the mysteries it proposes, than believe such incomprehensible mysteries. The grace of God therefore is necessary to enlighten the understanding, and enable it to pay due attention to those motives, and to show it that there is no real contradiction in the truths proposed by faith, but only an appearance of it, and that they are not contrary to reason, but above it ; this grace is also necessary for the will to fortify it against all its prejudices, and gently incline it to embrace the truths proposed, and to determine the understanding to adhere to them. This St. Paul expresses in these words, " The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that extolleth itself against the knowledge of God, and

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and *bringing into captivity every understanding* to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. x. 4. Finally, it is by this grace of God infused into our soul, that our faith becomes a supernatural virtue, and partakes of the merits of Christ, and our free will co-operating with this grace, and adorned by it, the acts of faith which it makes are agreeable to God and meritorious in his sight.

(5.) That our faith, in order to be agreeable to God, must have these two qualities, (1.) It must be *firm*; that is, without any doubt of the truth of what it teaches, but with an entire assurance and full persuasion that it is infallibly true: and the reason is, because our belief of revealed truths is not grounded upon our senses, nor upon any natural knowledge, nor upon the testimony of men; but upon the infallible authority of God, who cannot possibly either be deceived himself, or deceive us; and our understanding, reposing upon this infallible authority of God, receives every thing his holy church proposes as revealed by him, with the most undoubted assurance, as being the word of God himself, according to that of the apostle, "When you received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but, as it is indeed, the word of God, *who worketh in you that have believed.*" 1 Thess. ii. 23. (2.) It must be *entire*, comprehending all revealed truths; for if we refuse to believe any one thing which God has revealed and his church teaches, we destroy the very foundation of all faith; all the truths of faith stand upon the same bottom, the testimony of God, who reveals them; and if we suppose this testimony to be false in any one point, we ruin its authority in all; hence the scripture says, "He that believeth not the son, maketh him a liar, because he believeth not in the testimony which God hath testified of his son." 1 Jo. v. 10. Hence we are obliged to believe the whole doctrine of Jesus Christ without exception; as we have clearly seen in the *sincere christian*, Chap.

X. from the repeated testimonies of holy scripture.

Q. 12. How can we believe every article which God has revealed, seeing it is impossible for the great bulk of mankind to know them all?

A. Our blessed Saviour has fully provided against this difficulty; for having committed the whole body of revealed truths to his church, and given us the most infallible assurance, that "his words put into her mouth shall not depart from her from henceforth and for ever." Isa. lix. 21. But that "his holy spirit, the spirit of truth, shall abide with her for ever, and teach her all truth." Jo. xiv. 16, and xvi. 13. therefore whoever actually believes in general, whatever the church of Christ believes, and is ready to receive each article in particular, whenever it is proposed to him by her, does in fact believe implicitly every thing that Christ has revealed, even though he does not explicitly know each particular article. And though there are several articles, which every one is obliged to know and believe explicitly, this being the necessary means of salvation; yet the general implicit belief of whatever the church believes and teaches, is sufficient for all the rest.

Q. 13. What are those articles of faith, which each one is obliged to know and believe explicitly, as necessary means of salvation?

A. Some things are so essentially necessary for salvation, that if they be wanting, even though without any fault on our part, salvation cannot be attained: others are necessary indeed for salvation in so much, that if through our own fault they be wanting, we commit a mortal sin, which, without repentance, must deprive us of salvation; yet if they be wanting without any fault on our part, we may be saved without them. The former are necessary, as *the essential means of salvation* by God's appointment; the second kind are necessary only *because commanded*. Now of the truths revealed by God, which all are obliged to know and believe expressly, some are necessary to be known,

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known, as the essential means of salvation, in so much that without knowing them, according to each one's capacity, and believing them, none come to the years of discretion can be saved; others are necessary to be known, because we are commanded to know them, so that it would be a great sin through one's own fault to be ignorant of them; though if our ignorance was not from our own fault, we may be saved without expressly knowing them. Of the first kind are these following. (1.) That *there is a God who made and rules this world, and that he will reward the good, and punish the wicked.* Thus the scripture expressly says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God, *must believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him." Heb. xi. 6. and the reason is manifest, because if we do not know God, we can neither fear him, nor hope in him, nor love him, nor obey him; without which we can never please him; and hence St. Paul declares, that at the last day, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power, in a flame of fire, yielding vengeance to them *who know not God* . . . who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction, from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." 2 Thess. i. 7. (2.) That *God the Son was made man, born of the virgin Mary, died on a cross for our sins, and rose again for our justification.* That is, we must explicitly know Jesus Christ our Saviour, and what he did to save us. For as himself says, speaking to God the father, "This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Jo. xvii. 5. Hence "man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." Gal. ii. 16. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." Acts iv. 12. Now he that believeth not is already judged, because he believeth not *in the name of the only begotten son of God.*" Jo. iii. 18. and "He that believeth

believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Jo. iii. 36. And Christ himself declares, "If you believe not that *I am he*, you shall die in your sins: they said therefore to him, Who art thou? Jesus said to them, The beginning, who also speak to you." Jo. viii. 24. And the reason is, because without knowing Jesus Christ, we can neither love him, nor follow him as his disciples, nor obey him; and the scripture declares, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema," that is accursed, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. and that Christ, "being consummated, became the cause of eternal salvation to all *that obey him*." Heb. v. 9. And Christ himself says, "I am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me . . . my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give them eternal life; and they shall not perish for ever." Jo. x. 14. 27. (3.) It is also most probable that we are obliged to know distinctly, as a necessary means of salvation, the mystery of *the blessed Trinity*; because this is the principal mystery of our faith, and the great object of our adoration, in the name of which we are all baptized, by the exprefs command of Christ, and in which we are ordered to be instructed before baptism; "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Mat. xxviii. 19. Besides, how can we know that Jesus Christ is God the Son, and was conceived by the Holy Ghost, except we know that in God there is the Son, and of course the Father, and the Holy Ghost?

Q. 14. What articles are necessary to be known and believed explicitly, because commanded to be known by all?

A. Our blessed Saviour commissioned his apostles to teach all nations the truths of the gospel, and the observance of *all those things* which he had commanded them. Matt. xxviii. And St. Paul declares, that "those who obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus

Jesus Christ, shall suffer eternal punishment." 2 Thes. i. 8. Now it is manifest that one cannot obey the gospel without knowing it; from this it follows of course, that every one is obliged by this command to know the gospel of Christ, at least as much of it as is requisite to enable him to live a good christian life in the state of life in which providence has placed him. Hence every christian is obliged to know, (1.) The sense and substance of what is contained in *the Apostles Creed*; the principal articles of it are indeed concerning God and the incarnation, the knowledge of which are of absolute necessity; the other articles he ought to know in obedience to the above command of Christ, as being necessary to the being a good christian. (2.) *The Lord's Prayer*; because we are obliged to pray, this being one principal duty of a christian, and Christ himself commands us when we pray to say the Lord's prayer, which he himself taught us in order to be used by us; but it is manifest we cannot obey this command of saying it, unless we know it. (3.) *The Commands of God and of the Church*, and the *duties of one's state of life*; because, as obedience to these commands, and the performing these duties, are necessary conditions of salvation, according to that, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" it is plain this condition could never be performed without knowing what our duty is. (4.) *The Sacraments*; at least such of them as one is going to receive; their effects, and the dispositions required on our part for receiving them worthily. Because the sacraments are the great means ordained by God to confer his grace to our soul; several of which, all are obliged to receive at some time or other, and some of them we are obliged to receive often; and the receiving them worthily, so as to reap benefit by them, and not condemnation, depends upon the dispositions with which we receive them, all which therefore we ought to know; otherwise we cannot put ourselves in the proper disposition for receiving them, with fruit to our souls. (5.) By the command

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and custom of the church, all her children are obliged to know by heart the words of the creed, the Lord's prayer, the Ave Maria, the ten commands, the commands of the church, and how to make the sign of the cross, in the name of the ever-blessed Trinity.

Q. 15. What practical consequences flow from these truths ?

A. Several very important ones for different classes of people, and (1.) Those who through their own fault are ignorant of any of these truths of salvation, which they are obliged to know, and through negligence live in a habitual ignorance of them, are living in the state of sin, and in the continual danger of committing sin through the culpable ignorance of their duty, and of abusing the sacraments, if they receive any of them. (2.) Those are still more guilty, who put themselves in such a state of life as deprives them of the opportunity of being instructed in what they ought to know, and who by so doing, show a positive will not to know it; to these may justly be applied that of Job, "They say to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." But they should remember what is added of all such, "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." Job xxi. 13. 14. (3.) Parents, who neglect to teach their children in time; by themselves if they are able, and if not, by sending them to the public instructions of their pastors; and much more if they hinder them from this, on account of their worldly affairs; are guilty of a very great sin. (4.) God fathers and god-mothers, who neglect to get their spiritual children instructed, when their own natural parents, either neglect it, or cannot do it, are also guilty in the sight of God. (5.) Masters and mistresses, who do not cause their servants attend the public instructions of the church, and much more if they hinder them from it, will find to their sad cost, that the ignorance of their servants in the duties of their religion, will be imputed to them before the tribunal

tribunal of Christ, in proportion to the share they have had in occasioning it. (6.) Pastors of souls, who are strictly obliged to know the great truths of religion, much more amply and perfectly than their people, not only for themselves, but for instructing others, and who neglect the daily study of these things, spending their time in vain and idle amusements or useless studies, will have a dreadful account to give for such conduct; for that God who says, "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth; because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts," Mal. ii. 7. says also, "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee, that thou shalt not do the office of priesthood to me; and thou hast forgotten the law of the Lord thy God, I also will forget thy children" Osea iv. 6. and "Because you have departed out of the way, and have caused many to stumble at the law . . . Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all people." Mal. ii. 8. And to the same purpose is that of our Saviour to the pastors of his church, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more, but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men." Matth. v. 13. (7.) Those who are so gross and dull in their understanding, that it is morally impossible for them to learn and retain those truths which we are obliged to know, because commanded, are exempted from that obligation, because their natural stupidity makes them incapable of satisfying it. But they are obliged to know those other truths concerning God and our saviour which are necessary means of salvation, because without knowing these they cannot be saved: However it is sufficient for them, in order to satisfy this obligation, that they adhere to them by faith, when they are explained to them, though they are not capable to retain them. And it is the duty of their pastors to renew this explication to them, and assist them to make acts of faith upon them, as often as their circumstances may require it, par-

particularly when they are going to receive any sacrament, or are in danger of death.

§ 2. *Of Worshipping God by Faith.*

Q. 16. How do we actually honour God and worship him by the virtue of faith?

A. This we do every time that we make acts of faith; whether internally and in private by ourselves alone; or outwardly, confessing him and his divine truths before men.

Q. 17. What do you mean by an internal act of faith?

A. It is a profession or protestation made to God, that we do actually believe in him, and all the sacred truths which he has revealed, and his church teaches, precisely because he has revealed them. Now concerning the exercise or practice of this, several things are to be observed. (1.) That we may make these acts of faith, either internally in our heart alone, keeping our attention fixed upon God, and addressing them to him, as present with us; or we may also express them in words with our tongue, keeping our heart attentive to what we are saying. (2) That these acts may be made either as embracing all revealed truths in general; or may be restrained to some one or more in particular. Thus a general act of faith may be conceived in these or such like terms. "O my God, " I firmly believe all those sacred truths, which thou " hast revealed, and thy holy church teaches, because " thou, who art the eternal truth, hast revealed " them to her." An act of faith on any particular truth, for example on the blessed Trinity, may be thus expressed, "O my God, I firmly believe that " thou art one God in three distinct persons, because " thou thyself hast revealed it." (3) Hence it appears that when we repeat the creed, with suitable devotion and attention, we make a most excellent act of faith upon the principal mysteries of our religion. (4) That when we do make these acts of faith, whether in
general

general or particular, we honour and worship God, because we make an actual confession and acknowledgement of his supreme veracity; we submit our proud judgments to him; and prefer his divine authority to ourselves and to every thing else. (5.) That these acts of faith, when frequently repeated with suitable attention and devotion, are of great service to our souls, because they serve greatly to enliven our faith of divine truths, they give us a feeling sense of the importance of these truths; and when by constant and daily practice they become habitual to the soul, they give her a wonderful strength in time of temptation, and enable her easily "to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy," Ephes. vi. 16 and on this account are a most excellent preparation for a happy death.

Q. 18. How often ought we to worship God by acts of faith?

A. There are some circumstances wherein it is very necessary to do this; for example, when one comes to a sufficient use of reason to know God, and the duty we owe him as our sovereign Lord, we ought then, in a particular manner, to pay him this homage of our understanding by acts of faith; so also when one is in any temptation, especially if it be against faith, these acts of faith are the proper arms to fight against it; in like manner when one is going to receive the sacraments, they are a most proper preparation for disposing the soul to receive an ample share of the graces they confer; and when one is in danger of death, it is then most necessary to unite the soul as much as possible with God by acts of faith and other holy virtues. But besides these particular times, it is certainly most adviseable to make acts of faith a part of our daily devotion, and of the daily homage we are bound to pay to God, especially when we assist at the publick service of the church; and indeed the oftener we make them better, considering how much we honour God by them, and how profitable they are to our own souls.

Q. 19.

264 *On the first Command.* Chap. VII.

Q. 19. Are we obliged to make outward profession of our faith before men?

A. We certainly are, as often as the honour of God or the good of our neighbour's soul requires it. On this important duty, we have the following truths laid down to us in scripture. (1.) That the outward confession of our faith is necessary for salvation; "This is the word of faith, *says St. Paul*, which we preach: That if thou confests with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised him up from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made to salvation." Rom. x. 8. And Christ himself says, "Whosoever therefore shall confests me before men, I will also confests him before my father who is in heaven." Mat. x. 32. Luke xii. 8. (2.) That to deny Christ before men is a mortal sin, which will ruin the soul; thus Christ declares, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my father, who is in heaven." Mat. x. 33. Luke xii. 9. A faithful saying, *says St. Paul*, "If we be dead with him, we shall live also with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; these things admonish and testify in the Lord." 2 Tim. ii. 11. (3.) And to show us that, in all these places, the doctrine of Christ is included, as well as his person, we are assured, that not only if we deny his gospel or doctrine, but even if we be ashamed of it, he will be ashamed of us at the great day. "Whosoever shall save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, and for the gospel, shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For whosoever *shall be ashamed of me, and of my words*, in this sinful and adulterous generation; the son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he shall come in the glory of his father, with the holy angels." Mark viii. 35. Luke ix. 24.

Q. 20.

Q. 20. What practical consequences flow from these scripture principles?

A. From these truths it follows, (1.) That when a person is called upon before a judge, or any one in public authority, and questioned about his religion, he is bound in conscience openly to declare it, whatever his doing so may cost him, though the loss of all he has, or even of his life itself: silence or dissimulation in such a case, would be a mortal sin; the honour of God, the respect due to religion, the good of his own soul, and the edification of his neighbour, and confirmation of weak brethren, all conspire to require an open confession from him. (2.) That it never can be lawful in any case whatsoever to deny our faith, even exteriorly only, or before men, either by words, signs, or actions; for our blessed Lord declares to all without exception, that whosoever denies him *before men*, he will deny him before his father; and no wonder, for such external denial is in itself a grievous lie in a matter of the greatest moment, professing externally to reject as a falsehood, what one really believes in his heart to be divine truth; It is most dishonourable to God, giving the lie to his words, and professing outwardly that his holy faith is a falsehood; it is also most offensive and scandalous to our neighbour, and must naturally make him think lightly of our holy faith, or deny it. Hence the church of Christ has in all ages looked upon that as a most grievous crime; condemned as hereticks those who taught it was lawful on any consideration to deny our faith, and inflicted the most severe punishments on those who, even in times of persecution, to save their lives, had been guilty of it. Hence all the holy martyrs chose rather, as St. Paul expresses it, "to endure great fight of afflictions, and on the one hand indeed, by reproaches and tribulations to be made a gazing stock, and on the other, to become companions of them that were used in such sort; they had compassion on them that were in bands, and took with joy the being stripped

of their own goods." Heb. x. 32. Yea, they suffered death itself in the midst of the most cruel torments, rather than do the smallest thing contrary to their holy faith; yea, rather than even do any thing, though lawful in itself, but which could have the appearance of being so. Witness the glorious Eleazar, of whom we have spoken above, Chap. V. § 5. No. 6. (3.) That to be ashamed of our holy faith, or of any part of our Saviour's doctrine, and to be afraid of showing it, or defending it, for fear of the contempt of men, or of being laughed at by the world, is a grievous affront to Jesus Christ, a betraying our duty to him, a preferring the vain opinion of men to his approbation, and a being more afraid of man than of God, contrary to his express command: for all which he has declared that he will be ashamed of all such at the great day. *See all this matter fully treated in the Sincere Christian, in the appendix to the inquiry at the end of the second volume.*

§ 3. Of the Vices opposite to Faith.

Q. 21. What are the vices opposite to faith, which are forbidden by the first command?

A. Besides those mentioned above, there are chiefly three others which it is necessary to consider here, to wit, heresy, voluntary doubts of any revealed truth, and exposing one's self to the danger of losing the faith.

Q. 22. What is understood by *heresy*?

A. To understand this we must observe, that Jesus Christ, having revealed to his apostles all those divine truths of eternity, which he thought proper to make known to the world, gave them and their successors, the pastors of his church, commission and authority to teach them to all mankind, even to the end of time; and as he absolutely requires all men in all ages to believe these truths, under pain of damnation, for "He that believeth not, *says he*, shall be condemned." Mark xvi. 16. So he strictly commands all

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to receive them from his church, and submit to her decisions concerning them, as the only rule by which we can know them; and to take away all difficulty in obeying this command, he has engaged his sacred promise in the most solemn manner, so to assist and direct his church by his holy spirit, that she shall never alter nor corrupt his divine truths, but shall infallibly continue to teach them to her children, pure and undefiled, as long as the world shall endure. All which we have seen at large in the *Sincere Christian*, Chap. XI. and XII. Hence the church of Christ is the only means by which we can know what are the truths revealed by Jesus Christ, which we are obliged to believe, and what are not; she is the rule of our faith, by which alone we can know what are the true scriptures, which contain the written word of God, and what is the true sense and interpretation of them; she therefore is that sacred and infallible testimony, which God has established in this world of himself and of his divine truths. Consequently it is the duty of every christian, to receive the truths of faith from the testimony of the church, with an entire submission of his judgment, and a firm persuasion, that her decisions concerning these truths are the dictates of the Holy Ghost, and infallibly true. When therefore a person refuses to believe any truth which he knows is declared by the church of Christ to be a revealed truth, and prefers his own private judgment to her testimony, choosing for himself what to believe and what not to believe in opposition to her, this person is a heretick, and the sin he is guilty of by doing so is the sin of *heresy*: for this word, in the original language, from which it comes, signifies one that chooses for himself what he thinks fit to believe, in opposition to the sacred rule of faith left us by Jesus Christ.

Q. 23. Is heresy a grievous sin?

A. It certainly is; and this will easily appear both from what has been just said of the nature of it, and still more from the following considerations. (1.) It

is a great affront put upon Almighty God ; for as he has given us his church, as an infallible rule by which to know his divine truths, and has commanded us to receive them from her ; whoever refuses to do so, must either suppose God to be false to his promises, or that he commands us to believe a falsehood ; he rejects the testimony, which God has established of himself, and makes God a liar ; according to that of St. John, " He that believeth not the son, makes God a liar, because he believeth not in the testimony which God hath testified of his son." 1 Jo. v. 10.

(2.) It destroys the very foundation of the christian religion ; for as the church is the only rule, by which we can possibly know for certain, what those truths are which God has revealed, if a man supposes her to have taught false doctrine in one point, as every one does who rejects what she teaches, there can be no certainty of her teaching truth in any other, and consequently we can never know for certain any revealed truth at all, and of course all divine faith must be lost. In fact, experience itself shows this, from the example of all those who have in any age rejected the infallible authority of the church of Christ ; for however violent and fanatical they have been for a while, sooner or latter they have all dwindled away to irreligion and deism, rejecting the christian revelation entirely. And no wonder, for (3.) Heresy destroys all union, yea the very bond of union among christians, spreading dissention and discord wherever it goes ; for as there is no other possible way of knowing for certain what those truths are which Jesus Christ has revealed, but by the authority of the church, when that is once thrown aside, and every one left to his own fancy, which is as various among men as their faces, there can be no possibility of keeping them united together in the belief of any one thing ; every one has as good a title to follow his own opinion, as his neighbour has to follow his ; and all is necessarily reduced to mere fancy and opinion. Hence, (4.) The sin of heresy is condemned in the word

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of God, in the strongest terms : Thus, "A man that is an heretick, after the first and second admonition, avoid ; knowing that he that is such an one, is *subverted* and *fineth*, being condemned by his own judgment." 1 Tit. iii. 10. "Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who cause dissensions and offences, *contrary to the doctrine* which you have learnt, and to avoid them ; for they that are such, *serve not our Lord Christ*, but their own belly." Rom. xvi. 17. "Though we, *says St. Paul*, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you, *besides that which we have preached* to you, let him be anathema," that is, accursed, and he repeats it a second time that it may make the deeper impression. Gal. i. 8. 9. "In the last times some will *depart from the faith*, giving heed to *spirits of error* and *doctrines of devils* ; speaking lies in hypocrisy." 1 Tim. iv. 1. "There shall be among you lying teachers, who shall bring in *sects of perdition*, (or, as the protestant translation hath it, *damnable heresies*), and deny the Lord who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction." 2 Pet. ii. 1. St. Paul also classes *sects* or *heresies* among the works of the flesh, of which he declares, "that they who do such things, shall not obtain the kingdom of God." Gal. v. 20. Our Saviour himself condemns those that will not hear his church as heathens and publicans, Mat. xviii. 17. And St. John gives our submission to the pastors of the church as the distinguishing sign of our belonging to God, and by which to know the spirit of truth from the spirit of error. "He that knoweth God, *says he*, heareth us ; he that is not of God, heareth not us ; by this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." 1 Jo. iv. 6.

Q. 24. What is to be said of doubts concerning any article of faith ?

A. Several things are to be observed concerning them ; and (1.) These doubts are sometimes only wandering thoughts that present themselves to the mind, without alledging any reason for doubting,

but which discompose the mind in some degree. These are either the effects of a warm imagination, or the suggestions of the devil; and ought to be rejected with contempt, making an act of faith on that very article about which the doubt arises, and begging God's assistance against them, if they continue.

(2.) Sometimes these doubts are accompanied with false but apparent reasons, which make an impression on the mind. In this case the person must be very careful not to enter into a discussion of these reasons; otherwise he will run himself into difficulties which may embroil his understanding entirely; the reason is, because the truths of faith are above all human reason; we know from the revelation of God, that *they are true*; but we are too ignorant of all particulars about them, to be able to comprehend *how they are so*; and if we begin to examine them in themselves, and pretend to satisfy our difficulties by reason, we shall never be able to come to any conclusion. And therefore, as it is by the testimony of the church that we know they are revealed by God, and therefore, most infallibly true; the only certain remedy against these suggestions is to despise them entirely, and make an act of faith against them, protesting that we believe the truth they oppose, and every thing else which the church teaches, without diving farther into them.

(3.) Some times difficulties of this kind arise in the mind, by reason of the persons not being sufficiently instructed in what our holy faith teaches us concerning any mystery; the proper remedy in this case, is to apply to one's pastor, and learn from him what is the doctrine of the church concerning it, and to adhere to that precisely, without going to the right hand or to the left; and generally speaking, the full knowledge of that will take away all the difficulty.

(4.) Sometimes these doubts take their rise from one's being in company with the enemies of religion, hearing their impious conversation, or reading their books. This, as we shall see by and by, is a sin in those who voluntarily or presumptuously expose themselves

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selves to such occasions, for which they ought heartily to repent and crave God's pardon; otherwise they may provoke him to withdraw his grace from them in punishment of their presumption, and deprive them of the gift of faith, of which they render themselves unworthy. But (5.) In all these cases their great care must be never to consent to these doubts; for one who knowingly consents to doubt of any revealed truth, is guilty of a great sin; as he supposes, by doubting of it, that the article he doubts of is uncertain, and therefore, that it may be false; consequently, that God who has revealed it, may have told a lie, or that his holy church may have taught a falsehood; which is certainly a great injury to God's infinite veracity; *for heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away.* (6.) However, for the comfort of all those who are troubled with temptations of this kind, it must be remembered, that, however obstinate these thoughts are, and though they continue for a considerable time to afflict them; yet whilst they detest and abhor them, have a horror at all false doctrine, and a love and attachment to the truth, and use their endeavours to reject these diabolical suggestions and all his apparent delusive reasons, instead of being a hurt to their souls, they will be of great advantage; and the repeated victories they gain over the temptation, will serve to confirm them more and more in their holy faith; and God will at last crown their fidelity with many blessings. (7.) Lastly, we may observe, that the general remedies for all these temptations of doubts against faith are, humble prayer, acts of faith, and discovering the temptation to our pastor, to get comfort, advice, and instruction from him. First, *humble prayer*; because as the devil is the father of lies, so God is truth itself; as the devil is the spirit of darkness, so Jesus Christ is "the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." Jo. i. 9. If therefore we want the light of heaven, and wisdom from above to dispel the dark-

ness of these diabolical temptations, we must ask it of God by fervent and humble prayer, according to that, "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." Jam. i. 5. Secondly, *acts of faith*: namely upon that very mystery about which the doubts arise, with a generous magnanimity protesting one's firm belief of it, because revealed by God, and taught by his holy church, and despising all the suggestions of the devil to the contrary; because every act of this kind confirms the soul in her duty, and is a direct resisting the attacks of the enemy; and the scripture commands us to resist him in this manner, "whom resist ye," says *St. Peter*, strong in faith" 1 Pet. v. 9. And St. James assures us, that by this means we shall overcome him. "Be subject therefore to God, but resist the devil, and he will fly from you." Ja. iv. 7. Thirdly, *discovering the temptation to our pastor*: for there is nothing the devil is more afraid of than this; he knows that as long as a person conceals any temptation in his own mind, the confusion and trouble which it causes there, makes him incapable of discovering the delusion of his suggestions, and makes him fall an easy prey into his hands; but if the person opens his mind candidly to his pastor, the devil is aware that all his delusions will there be brought to light, and the person get such instructions and advice as will disappoint all his diabolical views; and therefore he hates this discovery, and strives to hinder it all he can, by putting fear and shame, and a number of other false reasons in the person's mind to hinder him from doing it; which should make those who are in such temptations the more diligent to fly to it, as the sure remedy to set their mind at ease.

Q. 25. What is to be observed concerning the exposing one's self to the danger of losing his faith?

A. If Jesus Christ has taken the greatest care to give us the utmost security for our faith, and has established the truths which he requires us to believe upon

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upon the most solid foundation; the devil on the other hand, who "goes about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us," 1 Pet. v. is no less solicitous, wherever he can find an opportunity to ruin and destroy our faith, or at least to corrupt and weaken it, if he cannot entirely destroy it. For this reason, where he knows that his internal temptations of doubts about any revealed truth will not succeed, he attacks us by external instruments, which are the conversation and books of unbelievers, or those of a false religion. Of these the scripture give us the following descriptions. (1.) "Know also this, that in the last days shall come on dangerous times; men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemous; lovers of pleasures more than of God; having an appearance of godliness, but denying the power thereof. *Now these avoid*: for of this sort are they that creep into houses, and lead captive silly women . . . now as Jannes and Mambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth, men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith." 2 Tim. iii. 1. Here the apostle describes one kind of those instruments, whom the devil makes use of to undermine the faith of good christians, especially of those, who either from want of time or abilities, or education, are not so fully instructed in the grounds of their religion, as to be able to withstand their attacks; and he tells us they are people of a proud, forward, overbearing disposition, who being full of themselves and of their own pretended learning, take every opportunity of railing at the true religion, misrepresenting and calumniating its tenets, and turning the sacred truths it teaches to a subject of laughter and ridicule; sometimes making great pretences to piety and godliness, but having nothing of the substance of it; and sometimes, like Satan when he tempted our Saviour, having recourse even to scripture, but which they wrest and misapply as they think most for their purpose. By such a conduct a person, who is not thoroughly instructed in the grounds of his religion, is apt to be
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confused in his judgment, he is at a stand, doubts arise in his mind, which, if he be not very careful to resist, may expose him to very great danger of being led away captive by them. (2.) Another kind of instruments the apostle describes as follows. "Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who cause dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learnt, *and to avoid them*, for they that are such, serve not Christ our Lord, but their own belly, and by *pleasing speeches and good words, seduce the hearts of the innocent.*" Rom. xvi. 17. These are quite opposite to the former, people of a calm, winning, flattering behaviour, who point their attacks at the heart and passions, and by smooth speeches, and fine promises, endeavour to gain the affections of the hearers, and by this means the more effectually seduce them. Learning itself is not proof against this battery, and many examples might be brought of the learnedest men, who have been seduced by this means. (3.) A third kind of Satan's instruments the same apostle tells us, is the very doctrine of false teachers itself, which is generally calculated to flatter the pride and passions of the heart, extolling one's own judgment, and appealing to it, as if the truths of revelation could be examined in themselves by human reason, calling the sublime and supernatural mysteries of religion to the bar of our limited and imperfect reason, teaching doctrines which are agreeable to flesh and blood, under pretence of gospel liberty, and rejecting those sacred duties which are a restraint on self-love and the passions. By this means their doctrine becomes pleasing to our corrupted nature, those who learn it, whether from conversation or books, begin to be pleased with it and wish it were true, and then, self love by degrees prevailing, the step is easy to believe it is true. Of this snare the apostle says, "*Shun profane and vain babblings, for they grow much towards ungodliness, and their speech spreadeth like a canker, of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus, who have erred from the truth.*"

truth." 2 Tim. ii. 16. Now as the law of nature itself obliges every one to fly from all dangerous occasions of hurting his soul, and the Holy Ghost declares, that, "He that loveth danger *shall perish in it.*" Eccl. iii. 27. consequently every one is obliged in conscience to avoid all those dangers above mentioned; and this obligation is confirmed by the express command of the apostle, in each of the three texts we have cited; *avoid them*, says he, and *shun them*; and whosoever shall presumptuously expose himself to these dangers, either by frequenting the company of those above described, or by reading their books, without a just cause or necessity, are guilty of a sin in the sight of God, and expose themselves to the danger of being deprived of the inestimable gift of their holy faith, which they so much undervalue. From the same reason it is, along with others of equal strength, that all communication in religious duties with those of a false religion, is strictly and repeatedly forbidden in the holy scripture, and by the church of Christ, as we have seen at large in the appendix to the Inquiry, at the end of the second volume of the Sincere Christian. If however, either through necessity or for some just cause, a person has been exposed to any of the above dangers, or even through his own fault; and has by that means given occasion to temptations against faith to arise in his mind, he ought immediately to fly to those three remedies mentioned above, Q. 24. No. VII. See also, Chap. VI. Q. 4. on the dangerous occasions of sin.

C H A P. VIII.

Of Divine Hope.§ 1. *On the Nature and Grounds of Hope.*Q. 1. **W**HAT is divine hope?

A. It is an ardent desire of salvation, accompanied with a firm confidence and expectation of acquiring it, through the help and assistance of God. Consider each part of this explication. (1.) *It is an ardent desire of salvation*; because hope is founded on desire, and presupposes that the one who hopes, has a desire of the thing he hopes for; this desire ought, in all reason, to be proportionable to the excellency of the good which is desired; and as our salvation, which is the possession of God himself, is an infinite good, and infinitely superior to every other good, therefore our desire of it ought to be ardent and strong, and far exceeding our desire of every other thing without exception. This desire must, (2.) *Be accompanied with a firm confidence of acquiring it*; because desire alone is not hope; a man may ardently desire a thing, and yet despair of obtaining it, as the poor man desires riches, the sick man desires health, and a person condemned to die, desires life, though none of them has any hope of obtaining what they wish for. Hence therefore the desire of any good, must be accompanied with a confidence of acquiring it, in order to be hope; so that though the good be exceeding great, and not easy to be acquired, yet we expect, by using the proper means and helps, at last to obtain it. Thus the merchant desires and hopes to obtain riches, by his diligence and industry; the soldier to gain conquest and glory, by his courage and bravery; the husbandman to get a plentiful crop by his labour and toil: and thus the

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christian hopes to acquire eternal salvation, by (3.) *The help and assistance of God*, enabling him to use the means for this purpose : for our Holy Faith teaches us, that the obtaining salvation is far above our own abilities ; that by our own natural strength we cannot take the least step towards it, and that our whole dependence must be upon God, by whose assistance alone, through the merits of Christ, we can be enabled to acquire it ; so that it is from him we are to expect both our salvation itself, and the necessary helps for obtaining it.

Q. 2. Are we obliged to desire eternal happiness ?

A. We are obliged to desire it above all things, which appears (1.) *From the express command* ; " Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his justice." Mat. vi. 33. " If you be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God ; mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth." Colos. iii. 1. (2.) *From the reward promised* : " Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." Mat. v. 6. " To him that thirsteth I will give of the fountain of water of life, free cost." Rev. xxi. 6. (3.) *From its being the one thing necessary* ; for " What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?" Mark viii. 36. (4.) *From the example of all the saints*, which see above, Chap. V. 9. 13. No. 3. (5) *From reason itself*, which teaches us that we ought to love and desire that most, which is most valuable, and most deserves to be loved and desired ; this is what we do in our worldly affairs ; now eternal happiness is infinitely more valuable than any thing else, and therefore deserves to be loved and desired above all things ; on which account our saviour compares it to a pearl of great price, and to a treasure hid in a field, to obtain which a man sells all he has and buys it.

Q. 3. Are we obliged to hope and trust God ?

A. To hope in God, is the essential duty of a christian, and a principal part of the homage and
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adoration which we owe to him; as appears (1.) *From the command*, repeatedly expressed in the holy scripture thus, "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and do not lean upon thy own prudence." Prov. iii. 5. "Offer up the sacrifice of justice, and hope in the Lord." Ps. iv. 6. "Trust in the Lord, and do good . . . commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in him, and he will do it." Ps. xxxvi. 3. 5. "Trust in him, all ye congregation of people, pour out your hearts before him; God is our helper for ever." Ps. lxi. 9. "Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth, now, and for ever." Ps. cxxx. 3. "Turn thou to thy God; . . . and hope in thy God always." Hos. xii. 6. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." Heb. x. 23. Having the loins of your mind girt up, being sober, *trust perfectly in the grace*, which is offered you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. i. 13. (2.) *From the reward annexed to this duty.* Do not therefore lose your confidence, *says St. Paul*, which hath a great reward." Heb. x. 35. And that reward is the very salvation we hope for; for "We are saved by hope." Rom. viii. 24. and "He that putteth his trust in me, shall inherit the land, and shall possess my holy mount." Is. lvii. 13. Hence "Blessed are all they that trust in him." Ps. ii. 13. "Blessed is the man, whose trust is in the name of the Lord." Ps. xxxix. 5. "He that feareth man, shall quickly fall; he that trusteth in the Lord shall be set on high." Prov. xxix. 25. "My children, behold the generations of men; and know ye, that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded." Eccles. ii. 11. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence: And he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters; that spreadeth out its roots towards moisture, and it shall not fear when the heat cometh; and the leaves thereof shall be green; and in the time of drought it shall not be solicitous, neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit." Jerem. xvii. 7. (3.) *From the*

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threats against those who do not hope in God. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord He shall not see when good shall come, but he shall dwell in dryness in the desert ; in a salt land and not inhabited." Jerem. xvii. 5. "The Lord heard and was angry, and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and wrath came up against Israel ; because they believed not in God, and *trusted not* in his salvation." Pf. lxxxvii. 21. (4.) *From the examples of the saints.* "For thee, *says David*, my flesh and my heart hath fainted away : thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever ; For behold they that go far from thee shall perish, thou hast destroyed all them that are disloyal to thee. But it is good for me to stick close to my God, *to put my hope in the Lord God.*" Pf. lxxii. 26. "Although he should kill me, *says Job*, I will trust in him." Job xiii. 15. Abraham "against hope believed in hope, that he might be the father of many nations." Prov. iv. 18. And of good king Ezechias it is said, "He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel ; so that after him there was none like him, among all the kings of Juda ; nor any of them that were before him. And he stuck to the Lord wherefore the Lord also was with him." 4 Kings xviii. 5.

Q. 4. Is it lawful to put any trust in ourselves, or to expect eternal happiness through our own strength and natural abilities ?

A. By no means ; this would be a great sin, and a high injury to God and to the merits of Jesus Christ, and the utter destruction of divine hope in the soul ; for of ourselves, without the help of God's grace we not only can take no step towards our salvation, but we would rush headlong into all vice and wickedness. The scripture is strong and clear upon this point ; for (1.) "We are not sufficient to think any thing of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." 2 Cor. iii. 5. and therefore "If any man think himself something, *whereas he is nothing*, he deceiveth

280 *On the first Command.* Chap. VIII.

deceiveth himself." Gal. vi. 3. for "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine; so neither can you, *says Jesus Christ*, unless you abide in me . . . for without me you can do nothing." Jo. xv. 4. Nay we cannot make the least advance towards Jesus Christ, unless by God's assistance. "No man, *says he*, can come to me, except the father, who hath sent me, draw him." Jo. vi. 44. Much less can we make any progress in his service without him, for, "Neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." 1. Cor. iii. 7. (2.) Instead of being able to do any good of ourselves, if left to ourselves we would run headlong into every kind of wickedness, because "the wickedness of man is great upon earth, and all the thought of their heart is bent upon evil at all times." Gen. vi. 5. and "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from their youth." Gen. vii. 21. for "the heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable." Jer. xviii. 9. and "out of it proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies." Mat. xv. 19. See here what man is capable of, when left to himself! which is further described by St Paul in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, from examples. (3.) Our strength and ability to do any good is only from God, by the assistance of his grace bestowed on us through the merits of Christ; for "our sufficiency is from God," 2 Cor. iii. 6. and "Every best gift, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of lights." Ja. i. 17. hence "it is God who worketh in us both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will," Phil. ii. 13. and our confidence must always be in him, "that he who hath begun the good work in us, will perfect it into the day of Christ Jesus." Philip. i. 6. But (4) of ourselves we are altogether unworthy of receiving any help or grace from God, both upon account of our manifold sins, by which we deserve nothing but the severity of justice in punishment of

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of them, and on account of the many times we have abused those graces he has given us, which makes us positively unworthy of them; and also because all we can possibly do, even with the help of his greatest graces, is of no real use to God; but "When we shall have done all things that are commanded us, we must confess, that we are *unprofitable servants*."

Luke xvii. 10. He has no need of us, he is infinitely happy in himself, nothing that we do can add the least jot to his essential happiness. Hence whatever grace or help we need from him, we must expect it, not from any deservings of ours, but from his infinite mercy alone, who is free master to show it on whom he pleases, and therefore says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy." Rom. ix. 15. (5.) Hence we see how detestable it must be in the eyes of God, proudly to presume upon our own abilities or deserts, and how justly he sets himself against all such as do so, declaring by his apostle, that "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Ja. iv. 6. and "The ancient giants did not obtain pardon of their sins, who were destroyed, trusting to their own strength." Eccclus. xvi. 8.

Q. 5. What then are the grounds on which our hope is founded?

A. Sure and solid are the grounds of the hope of a christian, being no other than some of the most essential perfections of God himself, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ; to wit, the infinite power, the unbounded goodness, and the fidelity of God, which can never deceive. (1.) By his almighty power, we know that he is able to help and save us. Whatever difficulties we may have to encounter, however strong or numerous our enemies may be; yet all is nothing to the almighty power of God. But of this see at large above, Chap. II. through the whole, and particularly §. 1. and there Q. 4. No. 4. (2.) By his infinite goodness we are

282 *On the first Command.* Chap VIII.

assured that he is not only willing, but most desirous to help us, and to exert his almighty power in our favour; that he wills our salvation, and is ready to give us all the necessary helps to enable us to acquire it. For all which see above Chap. III. through the whole. (3.) By his fidelity to his word we are assured, that he never will fail in his part to bestow every good thing upon us, and bring us to eternal happiness, he having repeatedly engaged his sacred word and promise to do so, if we be not wanting on our side to fulfil those conditions to which his promises are annexed. See what glorious promises he makes to us." And now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, and formed thee, Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, and called thee by thy name; thou art mine. "When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee, and the rivers shall not cover thee: when thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, and the flame shall not burn in thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the holy One of Israel, thy saviour." Isa. xliii. 1. He promiseth *pardon of our sins* if we repent and turn to him. "Thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers; nevertheless, return to me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee." Jerem. iii. 1. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he is bountiful to forgive." Isa. lv. 7. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezek. xxxiii. 11. He promiseth *peace and rest to our souls*, if we have recourse to him." Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. "Take up my yoke and learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls." Matth. xi. 28. He promiseth *strength* to overcome temptations, and *victory* if we do our part in resisting them: for "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that *you may*

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may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. x. 13. and therefore "Resist the devil, and he will fly from you." Jam. iv. 7. He promiseth all the *necessaries of this life*, if we prefer his service to every thing else. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice; and all these things shall be added to you." Matth. vi. 33. He promiseth *all good things*, whatever may be necessary for us, if we only ask them from him in a proper manner. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Mat. vii. 7. In fine, he promiseth *eternal salvation*, if we continue faithful to him to the end, and overcome the enemies of our souls; "To him that shall overcome I will give to sit with me in my throne, as I also have overcome, and am set down with my father on his throne." Rev. iii. 21. "Fear not, says Almighty God to Abraham, I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great." Gen. xv. 1.

Now, although the above truths are more than enough to settle our hearts in a firm hope and confidence in God; yet when we consider our own unworthiness and manifold sins, and our ingratitude for past favours, we are ready to be discouraged and to lose that trust we ought to have in God, esteeming ourselves entirely unworthy of his favour. And indeed this is the very case; we are certainly of ourselves altogether unworthy of his favour, and if we had no other merits to depend upon but our own, we could expect nothing but the utmost rigour of justice. But, thanks be to God, we have in Jesus Christ, and in what he has done for us, a perfect satisfaction to the justice of God for all our sins, and an inexhaustible treasure of infinite merits to make up for all our deficiencies, and to obtain for us all good; concerning which we must consider, (1) *the greatness of the love of God the father in giving his son for us.* "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but have everlasting life." Jo. iii. 16. Consider here *who gives; what is given; for whom, and for what end:* "By this hath the charity of God

appeared towards us, because God has sent his only begotten son into the world, that we may live by him. In this is charity : not as though we had loved God, but because he first loved us, and sent his son to be a propitiation for our sins." 1 Jo. iv. 9. (2.) *The greatness of the love of Jesus Christ*, in what he did and suffered for us ; compared to that of the good shepherd who having a hundred sheep, " left the ninety nine in the wilderness, and went after the one which was lost, till he found it." Luke xv. 4. but with what cost and pains did he seek it ? even so as to lay down his life for it. " I am the good shepherd, *says he*, the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." Jo. x. 11. which was the greatest proof he could give of his love, for " Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jo. xi. 13. (3.) *For whom did Jesus Christ do all this ?* For sinners ; " the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke xix. 10. " They that are in health, *says he*, need not a physician, but they that are ill . . . for I am not come to call the just, but sinners." Mat. ix. 12, " A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners." 1 Tim. i. 15. Now what an immense source of consolation is this to us ! St. Paul speaks of it with admiration, and draws from it an unexceptionable ground of hope and confidence in God. " God commendeth his charity towards us ; because *when as yet we were sinners*, according to the time, Christ died for us ; much more therefore now being justified by his blood, shall we be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son ; much more being reconciled shall we be saved by his life." Rom. v. 8. and " He that spared not even his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also with him *given us all things ?*" Rom. viii. 32. (4.) *For what end did he come ?* To be all in all to us ; To be *our mediator of redemption*, for " He is the mediator of the

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the new testament, that, by means of his death for the redemption of those transgressions that were under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Heb. ix. 15. *To reconcile us with our offended creator*; for "Christ is our peace, and died both for Jews and Gentiles, that he might reconcile both to God, in one body by the cross." Ephes. ii. 14. 16. *To be a propitiation for our sins*; for "God hath set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Rom. iii. 25. And, "Jesus Christ the just, he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." 1 Jo. ii. 2. For, "In him we have redemption, through his blood, the remission of sins." Ephes. i. 7. And he hath "blotted out the hand-writing of the decree that was against us, and hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross." Colos. ii. 14. *To obtain all good things for us*; for, God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ." Ephes. i. 3. And "all things of his divine power, which appertain to life and godliness, are given us through the knowledge of him, who hath called us by his own proper glory and virtue, by whom he hath given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature." 2 Pet. i. 3. *To be our high priest*, which, as St. Paul justly observes, ought to be a great source of hope and confidence to us; "seeing then, says he, that we have a high priest, that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus, the son of God; let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but one tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin: let us therefore go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid." Heb. iv. 14. "For that he continueth for ever, he hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby he is able also to save for ever them that come to God by him: always living to make intercession

286 *On the first Command. Chap. VIII.*

cession for us." Heb. vii. 24. In fine, Christ came into this world, *as our master* to teach and enlighten us; *as our guide* to conduct us; *as our guardian* to defend us; for he is *the way, and the truth, and the life*. He came to supply all our wants; to relieve all our necessities; to be the source and fountain of all grace, blessing, and glory to our souls.

Q. 6. What effects ought these truths to produce in our souls?

A. Chiefly these four. (1.) These firm and solid grounds on which our hope is founded, ought to excite in our souls a firm, unshaken, and unreserved trust and confidence in God, proof against all difficulties and dangers; being thoroughly persuaded that God will never fail upon his side to help and assist us in all our needs, and bring us at last to eternal happiness. This St. Paul beautifully declares in these words; "We desire that every one of you should shew forth the same carefulness to the accomplishing of hope to the end: that you become not slothful . . . for when God made promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater to swear by, he swore by himself . . . wherein God, meaning more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise, the immutability of his counsel, interposed on oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the *strongest comfort*, who have fled for refuge, *to hold fast the hope* set before us; which we have *as an anchor to the soul, sure and firm*, and which entereth in even within the veil." Heb. vi. 11. (2.) That the coming of Jesus Christ into this world, and the ends for which he came, should totally dispel from our hearts all pusillanimity and inordinate fear upon account of our own weakness and unworthiness; for, *if we be weak*, his grace is strong, for "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me." Philip. iv. 13. If our *prayers be unworthy*, when joined with his, and put up in his name, we are sure of acceptance, for "whatsoever you shall ask the father in my name, *says he*, that will I do; that

the father may be glorified in the son." Jo. xiv. 13. If *our sins be many and grievous*, the blood of Jesus is of infinite value, and is "a propitiation not for our sins only, but for those of the whole world." 1 Jo. ii. 2. Yea, is sufficient for those of ten thousand worlds. If we *be undeserving of any favour*, yet there is no favour which God can give but what Jesus Christ deserves for us. In a word, whatever our miseries be, we have in Jesus a perfect and most effectual remedy, for he "is made to us from God wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. i. 30. For this reason, St. Paul is so far from being cast down or dejected on account of his own weaknesses, that he rejoices in them, and thinks himself then strongest when he sees them most; as it is then that he confides most in God. "Gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me; therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am powerful." 2 Cor. xii. 9. (3.) That therefore, the sight and feeling sense we may have of our own miseries, ought the more to increase our confidence and trust in God; for the more we see our own miseries, the more feelingly we must be convinced that we have nothing in ourselves to trust to, and this should naturally oblige us to fly with greater confidence to God, who alone can help us, and make us wholly distrust ourselves, as incapable of any good; by this means implanting in our hearts a most essential branch of true humility. And Almighty God so strictly requires this feeling sense of our own weakness and miseries from us as a most necessary branch of our confidence in him, that he sometimes permits his most favourite servants to be overwhelmed and oppressed with tribulations of various kinds, and deprives them at the same time of all human helps or comforts, on purpose totally to expel from their hearts all vain confidence in themselves or in any creature, that they may turn their hearts wholly

wholly to him. Thus St. Paul says of himself, "We were pressed out of measure above our strength, so that we were weary even of life: But we had in ourselves the answer of death, that *we should not trust in ourselves, but in God*, who raiseth the dead, who hath delivered, and doth deliver us, out of so great dangers; in whom we trust, that he will yet also deliver us." 2 Cor. i. 8. Now it is to a confidence in God of this kind, founded in, and accompanied with this humble sense of our own weakness and unworthiness, that the most endearing promises are made. "I am a beggar and poor, *says David*, the Lord is careful of me; thou art my helper and protector." Ps. xxxix. 18. "Let the poor see and rejoice: seek ye the Lord, and your soul shall live; for the Lord hath heard the poor, and hath not despised his prisoners." Ps. lxxviii. 33. "He shall deliver the poor from the mighty, and the needy, that had no helper; he shall spare the poor and the needy, and he shall save the souls of the poor: he shall redeem their souls from usuries and iniquities; and their name shall be honourable in his sight." Ps. lxxi. 12. And the reason is, because the more one sees his own misery, and throws himself into the arms of God, the more he pleases and honours God by so doing, and the more God is glorified by delivering him; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy." Ps. cxlvi. 11. . . . But (4.) This firm and steady confidence in God ought to be accompanied with a wholesome fear on the part of ourselves; considering the perversity of our nature and the corruption of our heart, which inclines us so strongly to sin. For though we know for certain that God will not refuse us the necessary graces to help us to perform the conditions to which his infallible promises are annexed, and that he will undoubtedly bring us to eternal happiness, if we cooperate with his graces and perform these conditions, persevering in his service to the end; yet we do not know if we will always do so; but have always reason

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to fear, lest our perverse heart should fail in this, and being deluded by the deceits of the enemy, should abuse the mercy of God, and put a stop to the accomplishment of his promises. Yet this very fear ought by no means to disquiet us, but on the contrary should make us fly to God with greater fervour, and be more assiduous in imploring his assistance to prevent such a misfortune, and in faithfully complying with every branch of our duty in his service. St. Paul was afraid of his dear Corinthians on this account. "I fear, *says he*, lest, as the serpent seduced Eve by his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted and fall from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Cor. xi. 3. "Wherefore let him that thinketh himself to stand, *take heed* lest he fall." 1 Cor. x. 12. And let us always strive "*with fear and trembling* to work out our salvation." Philip. ii. 12. "*Labouring the more* by good works, to make our calling and election sure; for doing these things we shall not sin at any time." 2 Pet. i. 10. And it is upon the testimony of a good conscience that our confidence must be grounded on our side, according to that, "Dearly beloved, if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God." 1 Jo. iii. 21.

§ 2. Of the Advantages we receive from divine Hope.

Q. 7. Do we reap any particular advantage from hoping in God?

A. Great are the advantages we reap from this virtue; nay, we may justly say it is one principal source on our part of all kind of blessings from God, and obtains every good thing from him. True christian hope contains two parts; a great distrust in ourselves, and a great trust in God; an entire diffidence in our own abilities or endeavours, and a perfect confidence in the power, goodness, and mercy of God, and in the merits of Christ; a humble sense of our
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own misery, weakness, and unworthiness, which makes us have no expectation of any good from ourselves, and a high sense and esteem of the infinite power, goodness, and mercy of God, which makes us hope every thing from him. Now when a soul is thus disposed, and has this true christian hope in both its parts, there is no favour, grace or benediction, but what this will obtain from God : which his holy word declares to us in the following manner.

(1.) “ The Lord shall not delight in the strength of the horse, nor take pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that *fear him*, and in them that *hope in his mercy*.” Psa. cxlvi. 10. No, the Lord pays no regard to those who trust in themselves, in their own address, or parts, or abilities, or in any creature ; but his delight is in those who trust in his mercy ; these he favours, and these he protects. The promises he makes to all such, are exceedingly endearing, and deserve a particular attention. “ *Because he hath hoped in me*, I will deliver him ; I will protect him, because he hath known my name. He shall cry to me, and I will hear him. I am with him in his trouble. I will deliver him, and I will glorify him.” Psa. xc. 14. Where observe, that the reason why God promises so many favours, is, *because he hath hoped in me*. The same promises are repeated, and the same only reason assigned, in several other places of scripture. Thus, “ The salvation of the just is from the Lord, and he is their protector in the time of trouble. And the Lord will help them and deliver them ; and he will rescue them from the wicked, and save them, *because they have hoped in him*.” Psa. xxxvi. 39. “ When my heart was in anguish, thou hast exalted me on a rock ; thou hast conducted me, for *thou hast been my hope*.” Psa. lx. 3. “ Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for *my soul trusteth in thee* ; and in the shadow of thy wings will I hope.” Psa. lvi. 1. And thus Almighty God himself comforts Abdemelech, when he foretels him, that he would see the evil to be brought

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brought upon Jerusalem. "And I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord, and thou shalt not be given into the hands of the men whom thou fearest : but for a certainty I will deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be saved for thee, *because thou hast put thy trust in me*, saith the Lord." Jerem. xxxix. 17. From all which it appears that our confidence in God is the price he requires from us, for the protection and deliverance we need from him.

(2.) This is beautifully confirmed by the examples recorded in scripture, of all those who had recourse to Jesus Christ, for help in their miseries ; for we always find, that whatever other pious dispositions they had, their hope and confidence in him was that to which he attributed the granting what they wanted ; "Your faith, *said he to them*, hath made you whole," where by *faith* is properly meant the *belief* they had of his Almighty power, goodness and mercy, and the confidence which this produced in their hearts. By this our Saviour shows us, how acceptable it is to him, that we put our whole trust in him, and how powerfully it inclines him to show us mercy. Thus to the man sick of the palsy Jesus said, "Son, be of good heart, (that is, *have confidence*,) thy sins are forgiven thee." Mat. ix. 2. Indeed in the case of St. Mary Magdalen he extolls at first her great love, saying to the master of the house, "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much ;" but afterwards he told herself, "*Thy faith* hath made thee safe : go in peace." Luke vii. 47. 50. What merit do we find in the good thief, but the confidence he showed in Jesus Christ, by having recourse to him, as his king, even in the depressed condition in which he then was ? and see how it is rewarded ! He asked only to be remembered by him ; and Jesus Christ not only assured him of that, but also that he should be that day with him in paradise.

(3.) The measure of our confidence is even declared

clared to be the measure of the graces we receive; according to what Christ said to the good centurion, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." Mat. viii. 13. to show us, that if we have a strong faith and great confidence, we shall receive much; if our faith and confidence be weak, we shall receive little. "All things, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." Mat. xxi. 22. And therefore St. James declares, that when we pray to God, we must "ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, which is driven and tossed about with the wind: therefore let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Ja. i. 6. And hence the holy David says, "Let thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, *as we have hoped in thee.*" Psa. xxxii. 22.

(4.) None who put their trust in God are ever confounded, but sooner or later are sure to receive the effects of his mercy. "We glory in our tribulations, *says St. Paul*, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, trial; and trial, hope; and hope confoundeth not." Rom. v. 3. "My children, behold the generations of men; and know ye, that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded. For who hath continued in his commandment, and hath been forsaken? Or who hath called upon him, and he despised him? For God is compassionate and merciful . . . he is a protector to all who seek him in truth." Eccl. ii. 11. "And thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be confounded that wait for him." Isa. xlix. 23. "And they shall say in that day, Lo, this is our God, *we have waited for him*, and he will save us; this is the Lord, *we have patiently waited for him*, we shall rejoice and be joyful in his salvation." Isa. xxv. 9. "In thee, O God, I put my trust, let me not be ashamed; neither let my enemies laugh at me, for *none of them that wait on thee* shall be confounded." Psa. xxiv. 2. "In thee have our fathers hoped; they have *hoped*, and thou hast delivered them;

them ; they *cried* to thee, and they were saved ; they *trusted* in thee, and were not confounded." Psa. xxi. 5. Thus when a vast multitude of enemies came suddenly upon Josphath with a great army, he had recourse to God, and said, " As for us, we have not strength enough to resist this multitude, but as we know not what to do, *we can only turn our eyes to thee.*" 2 Chron. xx. 12. And in reward of his confidence he gained an entire victory. When Judith undertook the deliverance of her people, she expressed the most entire confidence in God alone, saying in her prayer to him, " Thy power, O Lord, is not in a multitude, nor is thy pleasure in the strength of horses, nor from the beginning have the proud been acceptable to thee ; but the prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased thee. O God of the heavens, creator of the waters, and Lord of the whole creation, hear me a poor wretch, making supplication to thee, and *presuming* of thy mercy." Jud. ix. 17. And the event showed that her hope was not confounded. So also Esther, before she went in to the king to plead for her nation, " prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, saying : O my Lord, who alone art our king, help me a desolate woman, who *have no other helper* but thee." Esth. xiv. 3. And in reward of this her confidence in God, she succeeded to her utmost wishes. When Nabuchodonosor in fury threatened the three holy children to throw them into the fiery furnace, and said, " And who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hand ?" they replied, with the utmost confidence in their God, " Behold our God whom we worship is able to save us from the furnace of burning fire, and deliver us out of thy hands, O King." Dan. iii. 15. 17. and their confidence was most wonderfully rewarded. So also the chaste Susannah, in the midst of her false accusers, " weeping looked up to heaven, for *her heart had confidence* in the Lord," Dan. xiii. 35. and he delivered her accordingly.

Q. 8. What is the reason why our hope in God is so amply rewarded?

A. Because by hoping in God, as a christian ought to do, we greatly sanctify and honour him; and show the strong faith and lively sense we have of his infinite power, goodness and fidelity, and of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, and how much we esteem and prefer them to every other consideration; and the greater our difficulties be, and the less human means we have to depend on, the more we honour God, by trusting wholly in him. Hence the scripture says, "Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid; *sanctify the Lord of hosts himself*, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be a sanctification to you." Isa. viii. 12. And again, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, *says God*, I will deliver thee, and *thou shalt glorify me*." Psa. xlix. 15. For this reason the hope of Abraham is so greatly commended in scripture, for Abraham "against hope *believed in hope*, that he might be made the father of many nations. . . and he was not *weak in faith*; neither did he consider his own body now dead, whereas he was almost a hundred years old, nor the dead womb of Sarah. In the promise also of God *he staggered not*, but was strengthened in faith, *giving glory to God*: most fully knowing, that whatsoever he has promised, he is able also to perform." Rom. iv. 18.

Q. 9. What other advantages in particular flow from our hope in God?

A. Chiefly these following, (1.) It gives us *great strength* to walk with courage in his service; because we know that with his assistance nothing can be difficult or impossible for us. "If God be for us, who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31. for "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me." Phil. iv. 13. "The eyes of the Lord behold all the earth, and give strength to them that with a perfect heart trust in him." 2 Paral. xvi. 9. Hence "none that trust in him, fail in strength. 1 Macc. ii. 61. for, thus saith the Lord God,

God, the holy One of Israel . . . in silence and in hope shall your strength be." Isa. xxx. 15. And therefore, "Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord." Psa. xxvi. 14. And the reason is, because God himself does for those that hope in him, and grants them whatever they ask of him ; thus, "Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in him, *and he will do it.*" Psa. xxxvi. 5. "Have the faith of God . . . and I say unto you, all things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." Mark xi. 22. 24. What the prophet Isaiah says on this, is particularly beautiful. "It is God that giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not ; youths shall faint and labour, and young men shall fall by infirmity ; but they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Isa. xl. 29. Wherefore the scripture says, "Do manfully and be of good heart, fear not, nor be ye dismayed . . . for the Lord thy God, he himself is thy leader, and will not leave thee nor forsake thee." Deut. xxxi. 8. "The Lord is good, and giveth strength in the day of trouble ; and knoweth them that hope in him." Nahu. i. 7.

(2.) It gives us *the victory over all temptations.* "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me" Psa. xxii. 4. "The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear ? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid ? Whilst the wicked draw near against me to eat my flesh ; my enemies that troubled me, have themselves been weakened and have fallen." Psa. xxvi. 1. "For by thee I shall be delivered from temptation, and through my God I shall go over a wall." Psa. xvii. 30. "O Lord, Lord, the strength of my salvation ; thou hast overshadowed my head in the day of battle." Psa. cxxxix. 8. And indeed the whole psalms are full of this truth. So

when St. Paul prayed to be delivered from the temptation of the angel of Satan, the Lord bid him be of good courage. "My grace, *said he*, is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity;" that is, the strength and power of God more perfectly shines forth in our weakness and infirmity; because the more weak we are of ourselves, the more illustrious is his grace in supporting us, and giving us the victory under all trials, conflicts and temptations. And on this account the apostle immediately adds, "Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me . . . for when I am weak then I am powerful." 2 Cor. xii. 9. Hence whatever temptations we may fall into, whatever rude assaults our spiritual enemies may make against us, we must never lose courage, but trust in our God, as he commands us by his holy prophet Moses, in these words, "Hear, O Israel, you join in battle this day against your enemies; let not your heart be dismayed, be not afraid, do not give back, fear ye them not; because the Lord your God is in the midst of you, and will fight for you against your enemies, to deliver you from danger." Deuter. xx. 3.

(3.) It makes the *most difficult exercises of a virtuous life, easy and agreeable to us*. Two things in the gospel seem very contrary to one another. The way to life, we are there told, is narrow, and the gate strait, the practice of virtue is quite contrary to our inclinations, and declared to be a mortification and denial of ourselves, and the like: on the other hand, Christ himself says in plain terms, *My yoke is easy, and my burden light*; and in other places of scripture we are assured, that the service of God is easy, that its ways are pleasant, and all its paths peaceful. In the state of innocence, the ways of virtue were all easy and agreeable, because there was no desire nor inclination in men to oppose them, the thoughts and inclinations of his heart were all towards God, and to whatever was agreeable to him. Whence then rises the difficulty

culty we now find? not from virtue itself, which is still the same; but from the corruption of the heart of man by sin. For by sin the dispositions of the heart of man are entirely changed, and turned away from God; his thoughts and inclinations are bent upon evil, and upon those things which are displeasing to God. Hence the difficulty we find in the exercise of virtue, because it is contrary to these our natural, but corrupted desires and inclinations; hence the way to life is become narrow, the gate strait, and the opposition to walk in it, strong; and hence, though we have the good will, we find it difficult to accomplish, for though *the spirit be willing*; we find *the flesh is weak*. To assist the good will in this rude battle, and render all these difficulties easy, nothing is more efficacious than a firm confidence in the help of God, and a lively faith and hope of the glorious reward which he has promised to those that overcome; for where this once takes firm root in the heart, it entirely changes the face of things, it takes away all difficulties, it makes the road easy, and even renders pleasant and agreeable the pain and trouble we meet with in the way. This the saints well knew from their happy experience; for, "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, denied himself to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer persecution with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians; *for he looked unto the reward*." Heb. xi. 24. So David says to God; "I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications for ever, *for the reward*." Psa. cxviii 102. So also St. Paul suffered the loss of all things with pleasure, and counted them as dung that he might *gain Christ*, pressing on with ardour to the prize of the high calling." Phil. iii. And no wonder; for we see even in worldly things, how much the hope of obtaining what we wish for, makes us despise all the troubles and difficulties we meet with in pursuit of it. Witness the husbandman, the soldier,

soldier, the courtier, and numberless others. What all these have to undergo in their different pursuits, is painful and difficult to flesh and blood, and contrary to our natural inclinations, and yet they become not only easy, but pleasant to them, and a subject of their glorying, from the hope of what they expect from them. If therefore earthly hope has such a powerful effect in them, how much more must christian hope animate the soul, and sweeten all difficulties in the service of God ; especially as those others labour for a corruptible crown, we for an incorruptible one ; their hopes are uncertain, ours most assured ; their prize, though obtained, can last with them but for a short time, ours for all eternity ?

(4.) *It sweetens all the afflictions and tribulations to which we are daily exposed* in this valley of tears. In the midst of all these miseries with which we are daily surrounded, whether of soul or body, the hope of a christian, the lively sense of that eternal bliss which awaits us in the next life, as the never-ending reward of all our sufferings, supports the soul with a most heroick patience, and fills her with joy and consolation. Our Saviour, after forewarning his followers of the many sufferings they would meet with in this life, adds, " In your patience you shall possess your souls." Luke xxi. 19. And St. Paul tells us that this patience is founded on hope. " Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation." Rom. xii. 12. Our Saviour even exhorts us to rejoice and be glad amidst our sufferings, from the hopes of the reward that awaits us. " Rejoice and be glad, *says he*, for your reward is very great in heaven." Mat. v. 12. " As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, *says St. Paul*, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound . . . That our hope for you may be steadfast ; knowing that if you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation." 2 Cor. i. 5. 7. Nay, he makes this hope a subject of glorying in his tribulations. " We glory, *says he*, in the hope of the glory of the son of God ; and not only so, but we glory

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glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, trial; and trial, hope; and hope confoundeth not." Rom. v. 2. And no wonder, for this divine hope, founded in faith, and enlightened by it, assures us (1.) That the sufferings of this life will soon be at an end, and turned into a joy that shall remain for ever. "Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be sorrowful, but *your sorrow shall be turned into joy* . . . you *now* indeed have sorrow, but I shall see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." Jo. xvi. 20. 22. (2.) That the more we suffer here, the more our consolations in Christ shall abound hereafter. (3.) That all the sufferings of this life are a mere nothing to the eternal weight of glory, which shall be revealed in us. See above, Chap. IV. Q. 10.

§ 3. *Of the Duties which divine Hope demands from us.*

Q. 10. What are the duties which hope demands from us?

A. They are chiefly these following. I. Frequently to worship God by acts of hope. On which we must observe, (1.) That an act of hope is a profession or protestation made to God, that we do actually put our trust and confidence in him for all good things in time and for eternity, and particularly for mercy, grace, and salvation, which are the principal things we stand in need of for our souls. (2.) That an act of hope, like that of faith, may be made either internally to God present within our hearts, or may be expressed in words to this purpose, "O Almighty and most merciful God, I put my whole trust in thee; and firmly hope for mercy, grace, and salvation from thee, my good God, through Jesus Christ, my Saviour." (3.) That by acts of hope we

we worship and honour God, because by them we make an actual acknowledgement of our total dependence upon him, and of the high esteem we have of his power, goodness, and mercy, and of the merits of our blessed Saviour. (4.) That if frequently practised, they are of great benefit to our own souls, as they serve to enliven our hope in God, and to root that holy virtue deeply in our hearts, producing a strong habit of it in the soul, which is of the utmost advantage to us in all our trials, difficulties, and dangers, and a most necessary preparation for a happy death. (5.) That therefore, we ought frequently to honour God by acts of hope, and make them part of our daily homage to him; in the same way as we have seen above with regard to acts of faith. See Chap. VII. Q. 18.

II. The next duty which hope requires from us, is, the fear of God. We are commanded to fear God, by Jesus Christ himself, upon account of his almighty power, and the supreme dominion he has over us, by which he can cast both body and soul into hell-fire, if we offend him. But this is not the precise light in which we are to consider the fear of God which the hope of a christian requires from us; for christian hope being founded in an ardent desire of possessing God as our true and only happiness, requires of us to be afraid of losing this object of our hope, and consequently of doing any thing that is offensive to him, by which we would be in danger of so great an evil. It also makes us careful to do all we can to please him, the more effectually to secure the happiness of enjoying him. This wholesome fear arises from a deep sense of our own weakness, of the strength of our passions and temptations, and of the malice of our spiritual enemies, and makes us fly with greater solicitude to the arms of our heavenly father for help against these dangers; and thus the fear of God both rises from hope, and strengthens our hope itself from which it rises; and on this account it is the source of many blessings to the soul in which it

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it resides. Thus, "He that feareth the Lord shall tremble at nothing, and shall not be afraid, for *he is his hope*. The soul of him that feareth the Lord is blessed. To whom doth he look? and who is his strength? The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him; he is their powerful protector, and strong stay, a defence from the heat, and a cover from the sun at noon: a preservation from stumbling, and a help from falling; he raiseth up the soul, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth health, and life, and blessing." Ecclus. xxxiv. 16. "The fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy, and gladness, and length of days. With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed." Ecclus. i. 11. "The fear of the Lord driveth out sin; for he that is without fear cannot be justified." Ibid. v. 27. See that whole chapter. "He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing." Ecclus. viii. 19. And therefore, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is all man." Ecclus. xii. 15.

III. To avoid sin, and keep the commandments of God. The hope we have in God is founded upon his power and goodness, and the effects of these divine attributes in our behalf, is secured to us by his sacred and repeated promises; but we have seen above, Q. 5. that these promises are all made with the express condition of our obedience; consequently our hope will be only a delusion, if we live in sin and disgrace with God. Hence, the scripture says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. vii. 1. God indeed "hath given us great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature; *flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world* . . . Wherefore, brethren, *labour the more*, hat by good works
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you may make your calling and election sure; for doing those things, you shall not sin at any time; for so an entrance will be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. i. 4. 10. Where it is evident, that the promises of God, and consequently our hope which is founded upon these promises, necessarily requires upon our part a life of innocence and holiness, spent in obedience to the commandments of God; if we perform this duty, our confidence and hope in God will be solid, according to that of the apostle, "Dearly beloved, *if our heart do not reprehend us*, we have confidence towards God." 1 Jo. iii. 21. But if we live wicked lives, and take no care to turn from our evil ways, our hope will be only a pretended hope, a mere presumption, an offence of God, instead of honouring him; for "the expectation of the just is joy, but the hope of the wicked shall perish," Prov. x. 28. "Their hope is vain, and their labour without fruit, and their works unprofitable." Wisd. iii. 11. "For the hope of the wicked is as dust, which is blown away with the wind, and as a thin froth which is dispersed by the storm; and as a smoke that is scattered abroad by the wind; and as the remembrance of a guest of one day that passeth by." Wisd. v. 15. "The hope of the hypocrite shall perish, his folly shall not please him, and his trust shall be like the spider's web." Job viii. 13. "The eyes of the wicked shall decay, and the way to escape shall fail them, and their hope the abomination of the soul." Job xi. 20.

IV. To be fervent and constant in the practice of prayer. Prayer is, properly speaking, the exercise of hope, and it is to prayer and a good conscience that those glorious promises are made, upon which our hope is founded; for "this is the confidence which we have towards God, that whatsoever we shall ask of him, according to his will, he heareth us. And we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask; we know that we have the petitions which we request of him."

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him." 1 Jo. v. 14. "And if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God, and whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things* that are pleasing in his sight." 1 Jo. iii. 21. Hence we see the necessity of prayer, and therefore if we neglect this duty, we need not be surprised if we want those good things we stand in need of. We neglect the condition required on our part! what can we expect? and therefore the scripture expressly says, "You have not, because you ask not." Jam. iv. 2. And as prayer is the child of hope, so the more it is accompanied with a firm hope and confidence of being heard, founded in a humble sense of our own weakness and unworthiness, and relying solely on God, the more efficacious will it be in obtaining all good for us; for "the prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds; and till it come nigh it will not be comforted; and it will not depart till the most High behold." Eccclus. xxxv. 21. which Christ himself declares thus, "I say unto you, all things whatsoever you ask, when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." Mark. xi. 24.

§. 4. *Of the Exercise of Hope in our Temporal Affairs.*

Q. 11. Is it lawful to hope for the goods of this life, and to ask them of God?

A. Most undoubtedly; because the goods of this life are intended by Almighty God to be helps to our salvation, in as far as by making a proper use of them according to his will, we obey him and serve him in them. But then, as, through the corruption of our nature, we are but too apt to abuse them contrary to his will, and ruin our souls; and at the same time as we do not know how far this would be the case if we had great abundance of them, therefore we ought

never to wish for them nor ask them of God, but in as far as he knows would be conducive to our eternal happiness; and we ought to have a firm and perfect confidence in God, that he will not fail to bestow them upon us in that measure and degree, which he sees is most proper for this end; (1.) Because for this he has passed his sacred promise, on condition of our laying aside all solicitude about the necessities of life, and seeking first the salvation of our souls; "Be not solicitous, says he, for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on; . . . for your father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow; for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the-day is the evil thereof." Mat. vi. 25. 32. and (2.) Because in the prayer which he taught us, he orders us to pray for the necessities of life: "Give us this day our daily bread." Now by the goods of this life is understood not only food and raiment, but also all other necessities of life, success in our temporal affairs, the necessary supply to our wants, support under our crosses, relief from our afflictions, and the like.

Q. 12. Is it our duty to confide and trust in God in all these matters?

A. Most certainly it is our strict duty to do so; although it is much to be lamented, and is an immense loss to ourselves, that we seldom comply with this duty as we ought; for if we examine the conduct of the world, we shall find that in all our temporal affairs, we commonly depend much more upon our own prudence, or talents, or riches, on our own endeavours, on our health, on the credit of friends, and other such helps, than upon God; nay, that men generally think no more of him in these matters than if there was no such being, or that he had no manner of concern in human affairs.

Q. 13. In what manner then ought a christian to confide in God for all these temporal goods?

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A. With an unlimited dependence upon, and submission to, the divine providence; firmly persuaded that God Almighty will bless his lawful endeavours in sending him such measure and proportion of these goods as his divine wisdom knows to be best for him; and perfectly resigned to the will of God when he sees proper to deprive him of any of them.

Q. 14. What is understood here by the *divine providence*?

A. By the providence of God is meant his eternal will, by which he regulates and governs all his creatures, according to his own wise ends and purposes. It includes (1) *His infinite wisdom*, by which he knows from all eternity every thing that ever was, is, or will be in this creation, all things and all creatures, all their actions, all their thoughts, and every thing concerning them; for, "The works of all flesh are before him, and there is nothing hid from his eyes; he sees from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before him." Ecclus. xxxix. 24. "The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most secret parts; for all things were known to the Lord God, before they were created; so also after they were perfected he beholdeth all things." Ecclus. xxiii. 28. Hence nothing can possibly come to pass but what God knew from all eternity, nothing can happen but what is perfectly foreknown to him. (2.) *His Almighty power*, which nothing can resist or withstand, and against which nothing can possibly be done; Nay, whatever ability any creature has to act, it is all from God, nor could any creature exist or exert any ability it has, without God's conservation and concurrence. "All things are in his power, and there is none that can resist his will." Esther xiii. 9. "In his hand are both we and our words, and all wisdom, and the knowledge and skill of works." Wisd. vii. 16. "No evil can overcome his wisdom." Wisd.

306 *On the first Command.* Chap. VIII.

vii. 30. "She reacheth therefore from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly." Wiſd. viii. 1. Consequently every thing that happens is not only foreknown to him, but enters into his plan, and is disposed of by his divine providence, according to his eternal purposes and views: he disposes the success of all affairs; he raises up one, and puts down another; he makes rich, and makes poor; he gives health, and sends sickness. (3.) *His absolute dominion* over all creatures, by which he rules and governs them, and disposes of every thing that comes to pass, as sole Lord and master, perfectly independent of any other, and on whom all creatures wholly depend. Nothing is excepted from his dominion, from the greatest to the least; a sparrow does not fall to the ground but by the disposition of his providence; our very hairs are all numbered before him. Hence "there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord." Prov. xxi. 30. "He bringeth to nought the designs of the malignant, so that their hands cannot accomplish what they had begun. He catcheth the wise in their craftiness, and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked." Job v. 12. (4.) *His unbounded goodness towards men*, by which he sincerely wills their real happiness, with an ardour above any thing we can conceive or imagine. For "The Lord is sweet to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Ps. cxliv. 9. And "as a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." Ps. cii. 13. Now from this over-ruling providence of God three grand principles flow, which point out to us in the clearest light what ought to be the tenour of our conduct towards him, and in what manner we ought to practise an unlimited dependence upon him, and a perfect subjection to every disposition of his providence concerning us, in all our affairs. These principles are as follows.

(1.) That nothing we undertake can succeed, or turn out to our real advantage, without the blessing of God,

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God, or against his will. This truth is repeatedly declared to us in the holy scriptures. Thus (1.) "There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord." Prov. xxi. 30. What was all the worldly wisdom of Herod, in his attempt to destroy our new born Saviour? Or the political steps which Saul took to destroy David? Nay the divine providence often turns the endeavours of worldly wisdom to defeat his views into the very means of promoting them; thus what Joseph's brethren did, as the most effectual means to prevent him from becoming their master, was in the hands of God the very thing which raised him to all his power and grandeur. (2.) "He catcheth the wise in their craftiness, and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked," Job v. 12. nay, turns even their politicks to their own destruction. Witness the accusers of Daniel, and of Sufannah. Dan. vi. and xiii. (3.) "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" Ps. cxxvi. 1. Witness the families of Achab, 4. Kings x. and of Jeroboam, 3. Kings xiv. (4.) "Except the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it." Ps. cxxvi. 1. Baltassar thought himself secure in his city of Babylon against the Medes and Persians; but he had provoked God to leave him by his sacrilegious banquet, and "the same night he was slain, and Darius the Mede succeeded to the kingdom." Dan. v. (5.) "Neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." 1 Cor. iii. 7. How many times did God punish his people by famine, notwithstanding all their usual industry and labour in cultivating their fields? (6.) "All healing is from God." Eccclus. xxxviii. 2. And therefore "It was neither herb nor mollifying plaister, that healed them, but thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things." Wisd. xvi. 12. If therefore God says *No*, "In vain dost thou multiply medicines, there shall be no cure for thee." Jerem. xlvi. 11. Witness the woman with the issue of blood in the gospel. (7.)

"The blessing of the Lord maketh men rich." Prov. x. 22. for "Who is as the Lord our God . . . lifting up the poor out of the dunghill, that he may place him with princes." Ps. cxii. 5. 7. and therefore as Lord and master he says to sinners, "Thy riches and thy treasures I will give to the spoil for nothing." Jer. xv. 13. as in fact he did to Ezechias, Is. xxxix. (8.) Nothing can save us from dangers without the aid of God; for, "The king is not saved by a great army; nor shall the giant be saved by his own great strength; vain is the horse for safety. Ps. xxxii. 16. Saul in the midst of his army fell twice into the hands of David; Goliath the giant was killed by a stripling whom he despised; and Absalom's mule could not carry him off from destruction; for "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the learned, nor favour to the skilful," Eccl. ix. 11. but all these things are disposed according to the pleasure of the divine providence. (9.) Finally, "*Every plant, says our blessed Saviour, which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.*" Mat. xv. 13. So that it is not only certain that nothing can succeed against the will of God, but even that whatever is not according to his will, whatever does not arise from him, is not his work, must sooner or later come to destruction, for "he that is not with me, *says Jesus Christ, is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.*" Mat. xii. 30.

(2.) That all the malice of men, all the rage of hell, though combined together against the servants of God, can never touch a hair of their head, nor do them the smallest hurt against the will of God, nor go one hair-breadth farther in afflicting them, than what God commissions them to do. This is an evident consequence of the idea we have given of the providence of God, and of the preceding principle, and is confirmed by what happened to Job; for Satan durst not touch any thing that belonged to him, till he was authorized by God to do it; and when he

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got leave to destroy his goods, but not to touch his person; his goods he destroyed indeed, but could not hurt a hair of his head till he got a new commission to do so. Nay, when our Saviour was dispossessing one in whom there was a legion of evil spirits, they being cast out of the poor man, durst not go even into the herd of swine, till they got leave from Jesus Christ, Mark v. And as for men, who could have a greater desire to hurt any one, than the Pharisees had to destroy our blessed Saviour? and how many snares did they lay to get him into their hands? But all to no purpose, till his own time came, in which he gave himself up to their hands; for though "they sought to apprehend him, yet no man laid hands upon him, because his hour was not yet come." Jo. viii. 30. See also the examples of Herod and Saul, mentioned in the preceeding number. And no wonder; for "If God be for us, who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Hence the many exhortations to the servants of God in holy writ, to have courage and not be afraid in difficulties and dangers, because God is with them.

(3.) That God will never refuse his servants any thing they ask, unless he sees that the granting it would be a hurt to them, or a hinderance of some greater good; nor will he ever permit any cross or affliction to come upon them, but what he knows and designs to be for their real benefit and advantage. The repeated promises he has made to hear our prayers, and particularly what we have seen above, Q. 10. No. IV. assures us of the first part of what is here said; and the second part is a natural consequence of his infinite goodness and mercy towards his servants; for he certainly has their real good infinitely more at heart, than they can have themselves, and he only knows what is really good for them; he takes no pleasure in their sufferings as such; for "God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living, for he created all things that they might be, and he made the nations of

of the earth for health." Wisd. i. 13. Nay, he is touched with pity and compassion, at the sufferings of his faithful servants, and sends afflictions upon them only because he knows it is necessary for their good; for this only end he sends them, and by his all-ruling providence he so tempers and disposes all their trials, that they never fail of producing this effect; for "We know, says St. Paul, that to them that love God, all things work together unto good; to such as according to his purpose are called to be saints." Rom. viii. 28.

Q. 15. What are the practical consequences that flow from the first of these principles?

A. The first of these principles is, that *nothing can succeed without the blessing, or against the will of God.* On this sacred truth, the hope and confidence which we ought to have in God teaches us, (1.) *That in all our affairs whatsoever, we ought never to undertake them, nor enter upon them, without first having recourse to God by fervent and humble prayer, to beg light, direction, and help from him.* For if nothing can succeed without God, and we expect the necessary help only from him, surely we ought to use the means for procuring it; and this the whole scripture assures us is humble and confidential prayer. "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and do not lean upon thy own prudence; in all thy ways think on him, and he will direct thy steps; be not wise in thy own conceit; fear God." Prov. iii. 5. "Above all things pray to the most high that he may direct thy way in truth." Eccl. xxxvii. 19. "Bless God at all times, and desire of him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him." Tob. iv. 20. This was the constant practice of all the saints of God, sensible that nothing could go well with them, if it wanted the blessing of heaven, and trusting not in any endeavours of their own, but in the divine protection, they had continual recourse to God for his assistance; this we see in Abraham and Moses, and David; and the neglect of this is particularly taken

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notice of in the scripture as the cause why Josuah was deceived by the Gabaonites ; he was deceived by appearances, and “ consulted not the mouth of the Lord.” Jos. ix. 14. Does not the universal neglect of this in the world show us the radical cause of so many misfortunes as happen in human affairs, and how much more men trust in their own prudence, in their own endeavours, and in the help of human means, than in the great God ?

(2.) *That in prosecuting our affairs, we must never use any means that are sinful and disagreeable to God, whatever prospect of success they may give us, but only such as are innocent and lawful.* This is a necessary consequence of the same principle ; for if nothing can possibly succeed without the help of God, how can we expect his help by doing what is offensive and provoking to him ? On the contrary, “ Wo to them that are faint-hearted, who believe not God, and therefore shall not be protected by him ; wo to them that have lost patience, and that *have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways.* And what will they do when the Lord shall begin to examine ?” Eccl. ii. 15. Consider the examples of the saints. Joseph was ordained by God to be raised to the highest dignity in Egypt, next the king, and that even his own brethren should be subject to him. This Joseph knew ; God had foretold it by his dreams. In the mean time Joseph is sold, and carried as a slave into Egypt. There his master’s wife falls in love with him, and entices him to accept of her favour. What would worldly wisdom have thought of this ? Surely it would have considered it as an occasion for Joseph to make his fortune ; his master was a great man at court ; by complying with the desires of his mistress, he secured her friendship ; and by means of her interest with her husband, what might he not expect ? But Joseph rejected with horror her wicked proposal, and said, “ How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God ?” Gen. xxxix. 9. Susannah was threatened with the greatest human

human evils, infamy, disgrace, and a cruel death, and the only human means she had to avoid this, was by consenting to the unlawful desires of the two elders; but she rejected the criminal proposal, and chose rather to expose herself to all these evils, trusting in her God, than to use such unlawful means to avoid them; "It is better for me, *said she to them*, to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord." Dan. xiii. 23. When David was pursued by Saul, who sought to kill him, two different times Saul fell into David's hands, so that he could have killed him and made way for himself to the crown; yea, he was even exhorted by some of his officers, according to the views of human prudence, to do so. But though David knew he was to succeed Saul in the kingdom, as God had foretold him, yet he would on no account do an unlawful action to bring about that event, but left all to the divine providence to accomplish his designs as he pleased. See 1 Sam. xxiv. and xxvi. Do we act in this manner? What shall we say of those who cheat and lie, and swear falsely in order to make riches? who spread about calumnies and falsehoods against their rivals to depress them? Who commit impurities before marriage to secure a husband? Who consult fortune-tellers, or use charms and other superstitions for some worldly views? Have such as these any trust in God?

(3.) *That if success attends our endeavours, we ought immediately and from the heart to give all the praise to God, and render him our sincerest thanks.* This naturally follows from the same principle; for if all the success be owing to the blessing of God, it is doubtless most just, that all praise and thanks should be given him for it; and this is what he expects and demands. "In all things give thanks, for *this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all.*" 1 Thess. v. 18. And, "all whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the father by him."

him." Coloss. iii. 17. This also was the practice of all the saints, and many of the psalms of David were composed for this purpose. Is this the practice of the world? When any thing goes according to our wishes, do we immediately give thanks and praise to God? Alas! we applaud ourselves; we are pleased with our own conduct; we speak of what we think our own prudent behaviour to others; we show them how we acted, and set it off in the most favourable light we can; but as for attributing our success to God, or giving due praise and glory to him, who ever seriously thinks about it? and what is this, but to show that we had no confidence in him, and trusted only to ourselves, and to our own prudence?

Q. 16. What practical consequences flow from the second principle?

A. The second principle is, *That neither the malice of men, nor rage of devils, can do the smallest hurt to those who serve God, against his will, or beyond what he commissions them to do.* From this it follows, (1.) *That whatever dangers we have to encounter in doing our duty, whatever difficulties, whatever opposition we may meet with, we ought never to lose courage nor be cast down or afflicted; but ought rather the more to increase our hope and confidence in God, and have recourse to him with the greater fervour; well knowing that he is able to assist us against all opposition, and that he never will abandon those that trust in him.* See above, Q. 9. No. 1. David well saw the danger and difficulty he had to meet with in fighting against Goliath; he was even deterred by the king from attempting it; but his trust was in God, and he said to Goliath, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied this day, and the Lord will deliver thee into my hands." 1 Sam. xvii. 45. Josaphat saw well the great danger he was in from the multitude of enemies that came suddenly against him, and threatened him and his people with im-

314 *On the first Command. Chap. VIII.*

immediate destruction; and "he betook himself wholly to pray to the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast to all Juda." 2 Chron. xx. 3. In his prayer, he expressed his total confidence in God, saying, "As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee." ver. 12. And immediately, the spirit of the Lord came upon one of the prophets, and he said, "Fear ye not, and be not dismayed at this multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's . . . It shall not be you that shall fight, but only stand with confidence, and you shall see the help of the Lord over you." ver. 15. 17. And accordingly God gave his people a most miraculous victory over all that multitude. The courage of Judas Maccabeus seemed to increase with the numbers of his enemies that came against him; indeed he and all his people took the most effectual method to secure the divine protection; they had recourse to God with the greatest fervour, "They fasted that day, and put on hair-cloth, and put ashes on their heads, and they rent their garments." 1 Maccab. iii. 47. And prayed to God with great ardour. And when his little army came in sight of the enemies, and saw their numbers and their strength, "Judas said to the men that were with him; Fear ye not their multitude, neither be afraid of their assault. Remember in what manner our fathers were saved in the red sea . . . And now let us cry to heaven, and the Lord will have mercy on us . . . and will destroy this army before our face this day." 1 Maccab. iv. 8. And accordingly he gained a most complete victory. Upon another similar occasion, Judas encouraged his people in this manner. "They trust in their weapons and in their boldness; but we trust in the Almighty Lord, who at a beck can utterly destroy both them that come against us, and the whole world." 2 Maccab. viii. 18. Tobias also gave this noble advice to his son. "Fear not, my son; we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things, if we fear God and depart from all sin, and do that which is good." Tob.

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Tob. iv. 23. And the event fully justified his expectation.

(2.) *That in all such cases we ought never to do the smallest thing that can displease God, in order to avoid any danger, or extricate ourselves out of any difficulties; but with an entire confidence in God, continue to do our duty, firmly trusting in him, that he will order all for the best.* Thus Daniel would not omit his prayers three times a day to God, though he knew that by doing so he would be thrown into the den of lions. Dan. vi. The three holy children would on no account worship the golden statue of Nabuchodonosor, though they knew that for refusing to do it, they would be thrown into the fiery furnace. Dan. iii. And Tobias in his blindness and poverty would not have any thing to do with stolen goods, though to keep him from starving. "Take heed, says he to his wife, lest perhaps it be stolen; restore ye it to its owners, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch any thing that cometh by theft." Tob. ii. 21. And in all these examples, God rewarded their confidence most abundantly.

(3.) *That we ought to receive all the trials that come upon us, as sent us from God himself, whoever be the immediate causes or occasions of them:* for as no creature can touch a hair of our head against the will of God, nor do the smallest hurt to us, farther than he commissions them to do; so whatever they do to us, it is his will we should suffer it; for though he wills no man to sin, and only permits the sin of those who hurt his servants unjustly, yet he expressly wills the effects of their sin, and the sufferings it occasions to his servants. Thus Job referred all his afflictions to God, and blessed him for them; thus Eli, thus David, thus Christ himself, considered all their severe trials as sent them by God, as the cup presented them to drink by their heavenly father; and receiving them from his holy providence, considered those who occasioned them in no other light, but as the instruments in his hand of executing his will on

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them; and by this means bore them with peace, patience, and resignation, confiding in his fatherly compassion, that all was for their real benefit and advantage.

Q. 17. What practical consequences flow from the third principle?

A. The third principle is, *That God will never refuse his servants what they ask, unless he knows it would prove of hurt to them; nor allow any trial to come upon them, but what he intends for their greater good.* The full conviction of this truth is a source of infinite joy and happiness to a truly pious soul that sincerely confides in God: for from this it follows, (1.) *That such a soul is never in trouble of mind, nor solicitous about the event of his temporal affairs;* he does his duty, he uses the lawful means which providence puts in his hands, because he knows it is the will of God he should do so; but having done this, he commits the event to the fatherly protection of God, in whose hands he knows all events are; he relies with confidence on the words of Jesus Christ, "Be not solicitous what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, or wherewithal you shall be clothed; your father knows that you have need of these things;" and he is firmly persuaded that the event will be such as God sees best for him. Thus Elias, persecuted by an impious queen, and obliged to fly into the wilderness, where he had neither meat nor drink nor house to dwell in, laid himself down to sleep under a juniper tree, with as much composure as if he had been in an apartment in the king's palace. 3 Kings xix. 5.

(2.) If things turn out to his wishes, *the true servant of God is not puffed up with vain joy and self-complacency,* as if the success were owing to his own industry; but referring all to the will of God, gives thanks and praise to him alone; rejoicing more in the accomplishment of his holy will, than in any pleasure the success of his affairs may give him.

(3.) If things go contrary to his worldly advantage,

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tage, if trials and afflictions come upon him, if he is reduced to poverty, if distressed with sickness, if loaded with calumny, if abandoned by friends, or whatever other trouble afflicts him, *the faithful servant of God, who has a true hope and confidence in him, is unmoved in the midst of all trials*; he refers all to God; he receives all from his hand, he is firmly persuaded all is for his greater good, and he says with holy Job, "Although he should kill me, I will trust in him." Job xiii. 15. Oh this is to have true confidence in God! But where shall we find this among men?

§ 5. Of the Sins against Hope.

Q. 18. What are the sins against hope?

A. The sins that are directly against hope, are despair and presumption.

Q. 19. What is despair?

A. Despair is a distrust of obtaining eternal happiness, or the helps which are necessary for procuring it. It is a very dangerous vice, as it shuts the door to all remedy, anticipates one's condemnation, and opens a door to all sin. For if a person once despairs of his salvation, and looks upon it as a thing impossible, he will naturally give over all endeavours to acquire it, and thus either lose his judgment with the horror of the thoughts of being lost, and perhaps put himself to death to be free of that torment, as was the case with Judas and many others; or he will give himself up to all manner of sensual vices, to divert his mind from that thought, and to live pleasantly at least for the present, as those did of whom St. Paul says, that "despairing they have given themselves up to lasciviousness, to the working of all uncleanness, unto covetousness." Ephes. iv. 19. It is therefore of its own nature a most grievous sin; because it directly attacks all these divine perfections, and the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, upon which our hope is founded, and shows how poor and mean an idea one has of the

power, goodness, and fidelity of God, which is highly injurious to God, and what greatly provokes his indignation. When the people of Israel in the wilderness despaired of obtaining a supply of their temporal wants, see how it excited his fury against them. "They spoke ill of God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? . . . Therefore the Lord heard, and was angry; and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and wrath came up against Israel; because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation . . . as yet their meat was in their mouth, and the wrath of God came upon them, and he slew the fat ones among them, and brought down the chosen men of Israel." Ps. lxxvii. 19. 30. Now if this was the case with those who despaired of temporal favours from God; how much more offensive must it be to him when one despairs of his salvation? What greatly adds to the injury done to God by despair, is, that it shows one to have no sense nor gratitude for past favours; and this is what God particularly complains of in his people on the above occasion in the wilderness, that notwithstanding all the wondrous things he had done for them, they still distrusted him in their necessities; "How often did they provoke him in the desert? . . . and they turned their back and tempted God, and grieved the holy one of Israel; they remembered not his hand in the day that he redeemed them from the hand of him that afflicted them; how he wrought his signs in Egypt," &c. Ps. lxxvii. 40. "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, and they provoked to wrath." Ps. cv. 7. How much more offensive must it be to God, when a christian despairs of his salvation, considering the great and wonderful things he has already done to save him and bring him to eternal happiness? See above, Q. 5. Chap. V.

Q. 20. Who are those who are guilty of despair?

A. (1.) Those who give up all hopes of salvation, and look upon themselves to be of the number of the

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reprobate. (2.) Those who despair of getting pardon of their sins, on account of their numbers and grievousness. Such as do this are most injurious to the mercy of God and to the merits of Christ; they imitate Cain, who said, "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon." Gen. iv. 13. Yea, they imitate Judas, whose perdition was not so much owing to his crime in betraying his master, of which he would have got pardon had he repented, as to his despair, which shut the door to all mercy, and plunged him into the gulph of final impenitence. (3.) Those who despair of being able to correct their faults and amend their lives, from the experience they have of their own weakness, evil inclinations and bad habits; which makes them give over using their endeavours, and give loose to their passions. Thus when God exhorted the Jews to return from their evil ways, "They said, We have no hopes; for we will go after our own thoughts, and we will do every one according to the perverseness of his evil heart." Jerem. xviii. 12. These are highly injurious to the power of God, and to the grace of Jesus Christ and his sacred promises. (4.) Those who in time of sickness or adversity, despair of relief or support from God, and therefore wish for death, or do any thing to procure it, or have recourse to unlawful means for relief, such as charms or superstitions; which is having recourse to the devil for aid, as Saul did, when despairing of help from God, he applied to the witch of Endor. (5.) Those who being in straits as to their worldly affairs, distrust the providence of God, and give themselves up with solicitude and anxiety to such human means as they think may conduce to relieve them, and neglect the care of their souls on that account; contrary to the express orders of our Saviour, who says, "be not solicitous for the body . . . but seek first the kingdom of heaven." (6.) Those who, if what they ask in prayer be not granted immediately, despair of obtaining it, even though it be for the good of their soul; and therefore cease praying for it: Not advert-

ing that perseverance is one of the principal conditions of good prayer, and that God often defers granting what we ask, on purpose that by our perseverance we may obtain it at a more proper time, and with more advantage.

Q. 21. What are the remedies against despair?

A. (1.) To imprint in our soul a high idea of the power, goodness, and fidelity of God, and of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, by frequent and attentive meditation on them, and on the great advantages of hope in God, and the many encouragements we have in scripture to trust in him. (2.) To have recourse to God by fervent prayer, that he may strengthen us in hope, whose gift it is. "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, says *St. Paul*, and God and our Father who hath loved us, *hath given us* everlasting consolation and *good hope* in grace." 2 Theff. ii. 15. And therefore he prays, "That the God of hope may fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. xv. 13. (3.) To accustom ourselves to make frequent acts of hope and confidence in God; by which that virtue, with God's help, will be daily more and more rooted in our souls.

Q. 22. What is presumption?

A. It is a vain and rash expectation of eternal happiness, and of the means necessary to obtain it, without performing on our part the conditions which God requires; either as if we had a title to it in ourselves, or as if we had it always in our own power to use the necessary means of acquiring it when we pleased. This also is a very grievous sin of its own nature; it is reckoned one of those sins which are against the Holy Ghost, because it abuses his goodness, as an encouragement to sin against him with the greater boldness, and generally leads to despair at the hour of death.

Q. 23. Who are those who are guilty of presumption?

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in the vain hope that they will repent before they die, that they will have time enough afterwards, that God is merciful, and will not suffer them to be lost, and other such diabolical delusions. Against all which, see Sincere Christian, Chap. xxiv. Q. 28. To which add this advice of the wise man, "Say not, I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? for the most high is a patient rewarder . . . say not, The mercy of the Lord is great, he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from him, and his wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord; and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee." Eccl. v. 4. See also above, Q. 10. No. III. (2.) Those who flatter themselves, that because they exercise some good works, say some prayers, give alms, or the like, they will obtain salvation, though they do not repent and do penance for some sins they have got the habit of committing, nor take the necessary care to amend them: not reflecting, that to such as these in a particular manner the scripture says, "Despise thou the riches of his goodness, and patience, and long suffering? Knowest thou not that *the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance*? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God." Rom. ii. 4. "For he that offends in one point becomes guilty of all." Jam. ii. 10. (3.) Those who presume upon their own strength, and endeavours, and resolutions, to get the victory over their passions, overcome temptations, and acquire any virtue, and do not put their dependence entirely on God, nor pray to him for help. This was the fault of St. Peter, when he said to Christ, "Though all men should be scandalized at thee, I will never be scandalized . . . Though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee." Mat. xxvi. 33. This presumption is very often punished by being abandoned

322 *On the first Command.* Chap. VIII.

abandoned by God to one's self, and left to fall into some humiliating sin, to convince us of our folly, and teach us our own weakness and misery; as was St. Peter's case. (4.) Those who living in the dangerous occasions of sin, will not leave them, from the vain hope that they are now so firmly resolved, that they will never more be overcome by them; this case is near a-kin to the former, and generally ends in the same disgrace. See above, Chap. VI. Q. 4. (5.) Those who in their worldly affairs trust more to their own prudence, their judgment, their riches, their friends, and other human means, than in God. "Put not your trust in princes, *says the royal prophet*, in the children of men, in whom there is no salvation; his spirit shall go forth, and he shall return into his earth: in that day all their thoughts shall perish. Blessed is he who hath the God of Jacob for his helper, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them." Psa. cxlv. 2. "Wo to them who go down to Egypt for help, trusting in horses, and putting their confidence in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen, because they are strong, and have not trusted in the holy One of Israel, and have not sought after the Lord." Isa. xxxi. 1. And therefore, "charge the rich of this world not to be high minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy." 1 Tim. vi. 17. See above, Q. 3. No. III. Of king Aha it is observed, as the height of that folly into which he run, after he had sought help from the Syrians, and was reprov'd for it, that when he fell ill of "a most violent pain in his feet, (*of which he died*) yet in his illness he did not seek the Lord, but rather trusted in the skill of physicians." 2 Paral. xvi. 12. "Remember Moses, the servant of the Lord, who overcame Amalek that trusted in his own strength, and in his power, and in his army, and in his shields, and in his chariots, and in his horsemen, not by fighting with the sword, but by holy prayers." Judith iv. 13.

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Q. 24. What are the remedies against presumption?

A. (1.) It is evident that presumption is a child of pride, and therefore the great remedy against it is true humility, and a just sense of our own great weakness and misery; of the vanity of all earthly things, of the supreme power and dominion of God above all creatures, and of his holy providence; all which can only be acquired by frequent and serious meditation. (2.) Serious reflection on the danger of putting off one's conversion, and of exposing one's self to the occasions of sin; and on the examples of these who have lost themselves by these means. (3.) Continual prayer to God for true humility and hope in him. See above, Q. 4. and particularly Q. 10. No. III.

C H A P. IX.

Of Charity, or the Love of God.

§ 1. *Of the Nature and Grounds of Charity.*

Q. 1. WHAT is charity?

A. Charity is a divine virtue infused into our souls, by which we love God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves, for God's sake. *It is a divine virtue*; for "charity is of God ... and God is charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him." 1 Jo. iv. 7. 16. So that charity unites us immediately with God. *It is infused into our souls*; "because the charity of God is poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." Rom. v. 5. By it *we love God above all things*; for "if any man love the world, the charity of the father is not in him." 1 Jo. ii. 15. By it *we love our neighbour for God's sake*; for

for " If God hath so loved us, we also ought to love one another . . . if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his charity is perfected in us . . . and this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother." 1 Jo. iv. 11. 12. 21. By this it also appears, that charity is a love of friendship between God and the soul, by which they are united together, and abide in one another; St. Peter calls it a being *made partaker of the divine nature*. 2 Pet. i. 4. And our Saviour says, " If any one love me, my father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him." Jo. xiv. 23. This friendship with our soul Jesus Christ is most desirous of, and says, " Behold, I stand at the gate and knock: if any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. iii. 20.

Q. 2. Are we obliged to love God with this love of charity?

A. We are most strictly obliged to this; because charity is so absolutely necessary a means of salvation, that it is impossible for us either to get our sins pardoned, or enter into heaven without it. The pardon of our sins is nothing else but the pouring down this holy charity into our souls, by which the guilt of sin is washed away, and we are restored to the friendship of God, and it is the marriage garment which adorns the soul, and without which it is impossible to get admittance into the marriage chamber. Mat. xxii. 12. Hence St. Paul assures us, that without this nothing can be of any avail to us. " If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, *says he*, and have not charity, I am become as a *sounding brass*, or a *tinkling cymbal*. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge; and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, *I am nothing*. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and

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and have not charity, *it profiteth me nothing.*" 1 Cor. xiii. 1. And no wonder, for "he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is charity." 1 John iv. 8. and "If any man loveth not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *Anathema.*" 1 Cor. xvi. 22. that is, accursed.

Q. 3. What are the motives or grounds upon which our obligation to love God is founded?

A. The first and principal motive to the love of God, is the infinite excellency of his own nature, his infinite beauty, his infinite perfections; all which render him infinitely amiable, infinitely lovely, infinitely worthy of all possible love from us and from all creatures. He has therefore a supreme and unalienable right and title in himself to all our love, because *he is what he is*; the most beautiful, the most excellent of all beings, in comparison of whom all creatures, yea, all possible creatures, are a mere nothing. Faith and hope are grounded upon some particular perfections of God; but charity embraces the whole, considers God as infinitely lovely in all divine perfections, and says to him with the spouse in the Canticles, *Thou art all lovely, O my beloved.* See what we have said at large upon this subject, Chap. V. throughout the whole. And as this is the most excellent motive for loving God; so a love of God founded on this motive, is the perfection of divine charity, and what every one who wishes well to his own soul, should endeavour all he can to procure.

The second motive to the love of God is, because he is infinitely good to us, and gives us the most endearing proofs of the greatness of his love for us, in the numberless benefits he has bestowed, and is daily bestowing upon us, and in what he has prepared for us in his kingdom. On this subject see Chap. III. throughout the whole. All which lays us under the strictest obligation of making him a return of gratitude and love, proportionable, as far as our weakness can allow, to his love for us.

The third motive to the love of God, is, because
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326 *On the first Command.* Chap. IX.

to love him is the very end of our being ; as he is our first beginning, so he is our last end ; we are created for no other purpose but to love and serve him, and our essential happiness depends on our doing so ; insomuch that if we do not comply with this duty, we shall be for ever separated from him, and of course be eternally miserable.

The fourth motive to the love of God is founded on his supreme dominion over us, and over all creatures, of which above, Chap. II. Now as this gives him the most absolute right and authority to lay what commands he pleases upon us, so, with the whole weight of this his divine authority, he lays the strongest command upon us to love him, as the first and greatest of all our duties, and the root from which all our other duties must take their rise.

Q. 4. How is the command of loving God expressed ?

A. It is expressed in these terms : “ Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength. And these words, which I command thee this day, *shall be in thy heart* ; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and *thou shalt meditate upon them* sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising : and thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and move between thy eyes ; and thou shalt write them in the entry and on the doors of thy house.” Deut. vi. 4. Our Saviour confirms this command in the gospel, adding also, that we ought to *love God with our whole mind*, and declares that “ This is the greatest and first commandment.” Mat. xxii. 37. Now in these words of the command, the universality and plenitude of that love which we owe to God is laid down in the strongest terms ; and it is evident from them, that God requires the whole man to be employed in his love and service ; for he not only commands us to love him with all our different powers, but with *the whole* of each

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each power ; he will be the only object of our *whole* love, so that we can love no creature for itself along with God, without depriving him of what is his ; for that *whole* which he claims to himself, admits of no division : so that we are allowed neither to love ourselves, nor any creature ; but only in God and for God, and with subordination to our love for him. And though the actual perfection of this divine love will only be in heaven, yet it is our bounden duty here to use our endeavours to acquire that perfection, and to come as near it as we can ; as will appear more fully by considering the duties which our love to God necessarily requires from us.

§ 2. *Of the Duties which the Love of God demands from us.*

Q. 5. What are the duties which charity, or the love of God, demands from us?

A. They are principally these following. (1.) That, as God is infinitely more excellent and lovely than all creatures whatever, we should prefer him in our mind and heart, in our esteem and love, before every thing else without exception ; that is to say, we must not only judge and believe that God is infinitely preferable to every thing else, but we must actually give him this preference in our affections upon all occasions ; we must place our supreme happiness in him, so as to be willing and ready actually to part with every thing, and as St Paul expresses it, to *suffer the loss of all things*, rather than to lose him by sin ; and our attachment to him in this view must be so firm, that no creature, nor any temporal consideration be able to separate us from him. We naturally prefer our health and life before any thing else that we possess in this world ; and in consequence of this preference, we willingly part with our ease, with our riches, yea, with any of our members, if at any time the losing any of them be necessary, for

preserving health and life; In like manner we must so prefer God to every thing else, as willingly to part with all, when the doing so is necessary on any occasion for preserving his love and friendship. "Love is strong as death, *says the spouse in the Canticle.* Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it: if a man should *give all the substance of his house* for love, he shall despise it as nothing." Song of Solom. viii. 6. Now this love of preference is what all are obliged to have for God, as being absolutely necessary for salvation; for if there be any creature which we love more than God, so as to be willing in the disposition of our heart to commit mortal sin rather than part with it, or in fact do actually commit such sin on its account, we can never, while we are so disposed, see the face of God in mercy: Our Saviour is plain and clear upon this point. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Mat. x. 37. "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 33. Examples of this love of preference for God we find in all the saints of God. Such was the love of Abraham, who for love of God not only left "his country and his kindred and his father's house," Gen. xii. 1. but was ready to sacrifice his son, his only, his beloved son Isaac, in order to please God. Gen. xxii. Such was the love of St Paul, who "suffered the loss of all things, and counted them as dung, that he might gain Christ." Philip. iii. 8. Such was the love of the apostles, who "left all and followed Christ." And so strong was their love to God, that they could all say with St Paul, "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . for I am sure that neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other

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creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 35. Such also ought the dispositions of every christian to be. And in requiring this from us, God requires nothing but what is most just and right; for does not reason itself demand that we should love and esteem and give preference to every thing according to its real worth and value? Seeing therefore that God is infinitely more excellent in himself, and more beneficent to us than all creatures whatsoever, it is certainly most just and right that we should love and prefer him before them. Besides, as he is our creator, our Lord, and our God, he has a perfect right to demand what belongs him as such. Do not kings demand and expect to be honoured by their subjects as kings? Do not parents and masters of families demand as their due, to be honoured as such by their children and servants? And is it not most just, that God should demand to be honoured as God? Now, what is it to honour him as God, but to love and prefer him before every thing else? Nay, he could not, consistent with his own sanctity, do otherwise; for as among men, if a king should allow any other to be esteemed and honoured as king, this would be to make that other king; so if God should allow us to love and esteem any creature as we do him, this would be supposing that creature to be as worthy as him; which is contrary to truth, and would be allowing us to honour that creature as God, which is idolatry: both which God is infinitely incapable of doing. Now this love of preference is properly what is meant by loving God *with our whole heart, and with our whole mind*; for when we have just sentiments of the infinite excellency of God, and esteem him above all things, we love him with *our whole mind*; and when we in our heart do actually prefer him before all creatures, and are ready to part with every thing rather than to lose him, we love him *with our whole heart*, as the law commands.

(2.) The second duty which charity demands from

us is, that we make it our continual endeavour to obey the commandments of God, and to do his will to the utmost of our power. This is a natural consequence of the former duty; for if we prefer God and his friendship to every thing else whatsoever, as we know that obedience to his commands is the condition required of us in order to preserve his friendship, this must of course make us exceedingly attentive to comply with this condition, and study in every thing to do his holy will. Besides love, when it is sincere, naturally raises in the heart a great fear of displeasing, and desire of pleasing the one we love; as we see in two friends, or in children who have a real love and affection for their parents; and this fear of displeasing, and desire of pleasing the objects of our love, makes us exceedingly attentive to do whatever we know to be agreeable to their will and inclination; insomuch that the smallest indication of what they wish us to do, even a look or a nod, is sufficient to engage our attention, and make us obey them. If therefore our love to God be real and sincere, it cannot fail to make us diligent in doing what we know to be agreeable to him, and in obeying his holy commandments; so that in demanding this obedience from us, as a proof and effect of our love, God asks no more than what is a natural consequence of true love wherever it is found. And this is what is meant by loving God with *our whole soul*, that is, with all the powers and faculties of our soul, when they are all employed in serving and obeying him. Hence we find that our love and obedience are joined together in scripture as inseparable from one another, and both equally demanded from us. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways, and *serve and love the Lord thy God* with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and *keep the commandments of the Lord*?" Deut. x. 12. With our heart we properly love him, and with the powers and faculties of our souls we serve him and keep his commandments.

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And hence our Saviour requires this obedience as the substantial proof of our love. "If you love me, *says he*, keep my commandments . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Jo. xiv. 15. 21. "If any one love me, he will keep my word . . . He that loveth me not, keepeth not my word." Ibid. ver. 23. 24. And the beloved disciple adds, "He that keepeth his word, in him in very deed the charity of God is perfected." 1 Jo. ii. 5. "For this is charity, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not heavy." 1 Jo. v. 3. They are not heavy indeed to one that truly loves God, for love makes them not only easy but delightful. None surely ever had such a love for God, as Jesus Christ had for his eternal father; and how did he show it? "I came down from heaven, *says he*, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." Jo. vi. 36. "I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me." Jo. v. 30. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and that I may perfect his work." Jo. iv. 34. "I do always the things that please him." Jo. viii. 29. And hence he says to his disciples, "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, as I also have kept my father's commandments, and do abide in his love." Jo. xv. 10. This therefore is an essential quality of our love to God, and a most convincing proof of its being sincere; without this, little regard is to be had to warm affections of the heart, or to tears of sensible devotion, when we think about God and holy things, for these may rise from other causes than a real love for God; but though one has none of these sensible affections, if he be steady and firm in keeping the commands of God, and doing his will, this is the solid proof that he sincerely loves him. But that this obedience may have its full perfection, we must not be content with barely doing the things that God commands us, but we must add to this another duty which his love requires, and that is,

(3.) That we refer every thing we do to his honour and glory; that is, that not only our obedience to his express commands, but that every thing we do, be done with a view to please him; that we reject all desire of pleasing ourselves, or of gaining the esteem or favour of men, and that our only aim and intention be to please God and glorify him; that this be our rule in all our deliberations, to know what is most agreeable to him, and that this be the motive which excites us to do it, *to please him*. God has a full right to every thing we do; for as we are by nature his servants and bond slaves, we are obliged to act for him continually; as he is our creator and preserver, he has a full title that every thing we do be done for him; as he is our last end, we ought to tend towards him by every thing we do, and refer all to him. Has not the gardener a full right to every thing that grows in his garden? and the husbandman to all the produce of his field? All we have and are, our soul and body, our senses, powers, faculties, and members, belong essentially to God; they are all his indisputable property, he has the most absolute dominion over them, consequently he has an indisputable right to every thing we do by them. Hence this duty is strongly enjoined us in scripture. St. Paul prays for his Ephesians, "that they may be rooted and founded in charity." Eph. iii. 17. that is, that charity or the love of God may be the root and foundation of every thing they do, as he expresses it in another place, saying, "Let all your things be done in charity." 1 Cor. xvi. 14. And still more clearly in the following words, "Whether you eat or drink, or *whatever else you do*, do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. x. 31. And again, "*All whatsoever you do*, in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the father by him." Coloss. iii. 17. And our Lord Jesus who, as we have seen, was so assiduous in doing his father's will, was no less attentive in doing all he did with a pure intention for his father's glory. "I seek not my own glory, *says he,*

he, if I glorify myself, my glory is nothing." Jo. viii. 50. 54. And this pure intention, of doing all we do for the glory of God, and to please him, is so necessary, that our best actions, if done for any other motive, and not for this, will be of no avail before God; Christ himself assures us, that if we give alms, or fast, or pray, to be seen by men, we need expect no reward from God for them. Mat. vi. 1. But that the least good thing we do, were it only to give a cup of cold water, if done for his sake, shall not fail to be rewarded. Mat. x. 42.

(4.) Another duty which charity demands from us, is, that we chearfully submit to this will of God in suffering as well as in acting, and be ready to undergo with pleasure, all the crosses and difficulties we may meet with in his service, and to suffer every kind of affliction, every torment, yea, even death itself for his sake, and rather than offend him by sin. This is a natural consequence of the former duties of charity, for as in obeying his commands and serving him, many crosses and difficulties will be met with, because "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 12. And "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God," Acts xiv. 21. if we prefer God to every thing, and are ready to lose all the good things of this life rather than to lose him by sin; consequently we must be ready to lose our own ease and satisfaction for the same reason, and therefore to suffer all the evils of life, as well as to lose its goods, rather than to lose God. Hence our Saviour makes this an essential condition of being his disciple. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me;" and "whosoever does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me." To suffer chearfully in the service of one we love, or for his sake, is a natural consequence of sincere love; what toils and sufferings do not parents undergo for their beloved children, soldiers for their prince, a loving wife for her husband
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in sickness, &c. ? Nay, love makes all such sufferings even pleasant and agreeable ; and if this be the case in natural love, no wonder it be much more so in divine charity ; hence the apostles rejoiced to be counted worthy of suffering ignominy for Christ's sake. St. Paul superabounded with joy in all his tribulations, and gloried in nothing but in the cross of Christ ; all the holy martyrs received death in all its terrors with joy, for the love of their heavenly master ; and indeed this is the greatest proof of the sincerity of our love to God, if we lay down our life for his sake ; for " greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jo. xv. 13. And this is to love God *with all our strength*, when all our strength is exerted in bearing the afflictions of this life, and carrying our cross for his sake.

(5.) Lastly, divine charity requires that we should actually honour and worship God by acts of his holy love ; on which we must observe, (1.) That an act of the love of God, is a declaration or protestation made to God, that we actually do love him above all things, because he is what he is ; and it may be done in the following or similar terms, either mentally addressed to God in the heart, or pronounced also with the tongue. " O gracious and good God, " I love thee above all things, because thou art infinitely good in thyself, and infinitely good to me. " I desire to love thee with all my heart, and soul, " and mind, and strength, and for love of thee I " am ready to part with every thing, rather than " to lose thee, my God, by sin." (2.) That in making acts of this kind we be careful that the heart and will accompany the words we pronounce, otherwise we shall be like those of whom the scripture says, " They loved him with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied unto him ; but their heart was not right with him." Psa. lxxvii. 36. And again, " This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me ; and in vain do they worship me." Mat. xv. 8. (3.) That the practice of these

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these holy acts of love, when done from the heart, is most agreeable to God, as being a worship proper to him, an actual discharge of that duty which he demands from us, as the first and greatest of all his commandments, and an exercise of the most excellent of all virtues. The heart is what God chiefly requires of us. *My son*, says he, *give me thy heart*, and it is by fervent acts of holy love that we give our heart to him. (4.) They are also most beneficial to our souls, because they depress and weaken the motions of our self-love; they fortify the soul against temptations; they increase the habit of divine love in the soul, and they are the best preservative against all the snares of the enemy at the hour of death. Hence, (5.) Whoever wishes well to his own soul, will not be content with barely practising these holy acts of divine love, on these occasions only when he is strictly obliged to make them; but he will upon all occasions, at all times, in his daily devotions, and frequently through the day, make it his great study to advance his soul in this divine virtue, by the frequent exercise of its holy acts.

§ 3. Of the Effects which Charity produces in the Soul.

Q. 6. What are the effects which charity produces in the soul?

A. Many and admirable are the blessed effects which this holy virtue of charity produces in the soul; but we shall here take notice only of some of the most practical ones. And,

(1.) *Zeal for the honour of God.* Let us examine our own hearts in order to understand this. When we have a sincere love for another, we wish him well and happy; whatever pleases him gives us pleasure, and every thing that injures him gives us pain and affliction: we are ready to do him all the service in our power, and to defend him from any evil. In fact,

to love one is nothing else but to wish him well and do him good. See how ready one is to defend the honour of his prince whom he loves, and what a pain it gives him to see or hear him vilipended or dishonoured by others; see with what ardour a loving son defends the character of his absent father, how much he endeavours to make others think well of him, and how much he is distressed and thinks himself affronted if any one speaks ill of his father in his presence; see the same effects of love in wives to their husbands, in husbands to their wives, and in sincere friends to one another. This effect, which is a necessary attendant on all love, when real and sincere, is conspicuous in the love of God, above all others. The infinite excellency of God, who is the object of charity, the infinite merit he has to be loved, honoured and served, by all creatures, the incredible joy and delight that is found in his holy love, above what can be found in the love of any creature, makes a soul, whose affections are fixed upon him, insatiable in her ardent desires of seeing him honoured and served by all, and pierces her with the most sensible affliction, when she sees him dishonoured and offended. And these desires do not lie idle in such a soul, but excite her most violently to do and suffer great things, in order to promote the honour of her beloved object. The book of Psalms is full of expressions of these ardent desires of the glory of God, frequently inviting heaven and earth, men and angels, and all creatures, to praise, and bless, and magnify his holy name; and the examples of the apostles, and other apostolical men in all ages, show what great things this zeal for God's glory is capable of inspiring those to do and suffer, whose hearts are inflamed with his holy love: and as for their distresses, when they see God offended; who can conceive how it pierces their hearts, and fills their souls with anguish? "Moses was a man exceeding meek above all men that dwelt upon the earth." Numb. xii. 3. And therefore never would be displeased, nor resent any in-

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injury done to himself; but when coming down from the mountain he saw the grievous injury done to God by his people, in worshipping the golden calf, he "being very angry, threw the tables out of his hand, and broke them at the foot of the mount."

Exod. xxii. 19. The high priest of God, Eli, now an old man, heard the loss of the battle, and the defeat of his people by the Philistines with tranquility, he heard that his two sons had been slain in the battle with dry eyes, but when the messenger told him at last, that the ark of God was taken, he was so oppressed with grief and affliction, that "he fell from his stool backwards by the door, and broke his neck and died."

1 Sam. iv. 18. David expresses his zeal for the glory of God in these strong terms; "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me." Psa.

lxviii. 10. "My zeal hath made me pine away, because my enemies forgot thy words . . . I beheld the transgressors, and I pined away, because they kept not thy word." Psa. cxviii. 39. 58. And when

God appeared to Elias in the desert, and asked him, "What dost thou here, Elias? He answered, With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, they have thrown down thy altars, they have slain thy prophets with the sword." 3 Kings xix. 10. 14.

And when Esdras was told the sins his people had been guilty of in his absence, "When I heard this word, *says he*, I rent my mantle and my coat, and plucked off the hairs of my head and my beard, and I sat down mourning . . . and at the evening sacrifice I rose up from my affliction, and having rent my mantle and my garment, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands to the Lord my God, and said, My God, I am confounded and ashamed to lift up my face before thee, &c." 1 Esd. ix. 3. 5. Nay, the holy Mathathias upon his death bed, exhorted his sons "to be zealous for the law, and *give their lives* for the covenant of their fathers." 1 Macc. ii. 50.

And

And his valiant son Judas exhorted his little army to fight manfully against those nations, "that are assembled, *said he*, against us, to destroy us and our sanctuary; for it is better for us *to die* in battle, than *to see the evils* of our nation and *of the holies*." 1 Mac. iii. 58. Here then we have a rule by which to know what kind of love we have for God; for if we can hear his holy name profaned and blasphemed by oaths and curses, his infinite sanctity affronted by obscene words, his majesty contemned by numberless other sins, without feeling the least concern, without showing the least displeasure, without saying a single word of disapprobation; can we say we have any grain of his holy love in our hearts? We, who are so zealous for our own honour, and the honour of our parents or friends, that if we hear the least word against it, are all on fire; and yet to be dumb stocks when the honour of God is concerned? But what shall we say if, instead of being displeased on such occasions, we take part in them, and make them a subject of mirth and laughter?

(2.) *A sincere sorrow and contrition for one's own sins.* If the love we bear to our parents or friends makes us sorrowful and afflicted when any evil comes upon them; much greater and more grievous would our sorrow be, if we ourselves should be the cause of their sufferings; so also, and much more so, does the true and sincere love of God fill a soul with sorrow and contrition, on account of the sins she has committed against him. His infinite excellency, which deserves all possible honour and veneration, his infinite beauty which deserves all possible love, his infinite goodness to us, which loudly demands all possible gratitude on our part, and all his other divine perfections presenting themselves to a soul, which is filled with his holy love, it pierces her with the most feeling grief to think she has ever been so unhappy as to offend and injure by her sins, so amiable, so lovely a being. "My eyes, *says David*, have sent forth springs of water, because they have not kept

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kept thy law." Psa. cxxiii. 136. "I have laboured in my groanings: every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears." Ps. vi. 7. No sooner was St Peter sensible of his crime in denying his beloved master, than "going forth he wept bitterly." Mat. xxvi. 75. And the great love that Mary Magdalen had for Jesus Christ, for which *many sins were forgiven her*, raised such a grief in her soul for her former crimes, that she washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. See here then another rule by which to judge of our love to God. For the same reason the love of God excites in the soul a horror and detestation of sin, as the only real evil, because it is an evil done to God, the great object of its love; hence the exhortation of the prophet, "You that love the Lord, hate evil." Ps. xcvi. 10. And therefore he says, "Lord, have I not hated them that hate thee? and pined away because of thy enemies? I have hated them with a perfect hatred, and they are become enemies to me." Ps. cxxxviii. 21. The only enemies of God are sins, and the prophet declares he hates them with a *perfect hatred*, that is, with an irreconcilable hatred, and above every thing else that is horrible. He considers sin as his own greatest enemy because an enemy to God, and declares that he who loves sin becomes an enemy to himself. "He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul." Ps. x. 6. Thus all the saints of God, who loved him, hated sin to such a degree as to be ready to suffer all evils, and the worst of deaths, rather than to consent to it.

(3.) Another effect which the love of God produces in the soul is, *to make us put a high value and esteem upon all the graces and benefits he bestows upon us, and be grateful and thankful to him for them.* Nothing is little in our eyes that comes from the hand of those we love: We measure the value of the favour, not from the value it has in itself, but from the affection from which it comes; every testimony of affection from those we love, is delightful to us, and every favour received from them is received as a new proof of their affection; hence it fills the heart

with pleasure, and excites the most grateful sentiments in the soul, which naturally show themselves by every thankful testimony we can give of the sense we have of the obligation. Consequently, if we have a sincere love for God, this must make us set the highest value upon every favour we receive from him, especially considering, that they are all of inestimable value in themselves, of the utmost advantage to our souls, proceed from, and are proofs of his most pure and ardent love for us, and that we are of ourselves most undeserving of them. What sentiments of gratitude must these considerations excite in a loving soul? how must they spur her on to continual acts of thanksgiving, praise, and love to God? and so much the more, when we reflect that this return of thanksgiving and praise is the only one we can make for his favours, and what he expressly requires from us. Thus “in *all things* give thanks; for this is *the will of God* in Christ Jesus concerning you all.” 1 Thess. v. 18. “*All whatsoever you do*, in word, or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, *giving thanks to God*, and the father by him.” Coloss. iii. 17. “Be instant in prayer, watching in it *with thanksgiving*.” Coloss. iv. 2. Nay, this is laid down as what ought to be the continual employment of a christian. “Be ye filled with the holy spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; *giving thanks always for all things*, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the father.” Ephes. v. 18. Nothing is more agreeable to God than our faithful compliance with this duty, and nothing makes him more ready to bestow new favours upon us, than our being grateful for those we have already received; and on the contrary nothing provokes him more to deprive us of his graces, than our undervaluing them, and being ungrateful for them; and nothing is more apt to make him at last abandon us entirely; as was the case with those of whom the apostle says, “because that

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that, when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, *nor given thanks*, but became vain in their own thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened ; for professing themselves to be wise they become fools . . . *therefore* God gave them up to the desires of their heart." Rom. i. 21. Hence we find that giving thanks to God, and praising him, was the continual employment of the holy servants of God. Of Tobias we are told that even when struck with blindness, " He repined not against God because the evil of blindness had befallen him, but continued immoveable in the fear of God, *giving thanks to God all the days of his life*. Tob. ii. 13. Job also, when all his misfortunes came upon him, " fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said . . . The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done ; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job i. 20. David was exceeding diligent in this holy exercise, and the whole psalms are full of the warmest expressions of gratitude and praise to God. And in all St Paul's epistles, how frequently does he give thanks to God for the favours bestowed upon his dear children to whom he writes, and for the graces he had received himself ? Our blessed Saviour also, who came to be our model in all perfection, gives us frequent examples in the gospel of this holy exercise. We ought therefore often to meditate on the many favours we receive from God, and on the love and affection with which he gives them, that we may conceive a just sense of them, and excite our souls to gratitude and thanksgiving for them. And as every thing that comes from the hand of God is designed for our good, and a favour done us, whether it be agreeable to the views of our self-love or not, therefore we ought *in all things and always* to give thanks to God, as his holy word expressly requires ; even in our tribulations and affections, as Job and Tobias did. Happy tho se who from their heart comply with this sacred duty !

(4.) Charity also produces in the heart, a love, respect and veneration for every thing that belongs to God, or is particularly connected with him; and this is always the stronger, the stronger that connection is. This is also a natural effect of all love; for when we have a strong and tender affection for any one, our love is not confined to his person alone, it extends itself to every thing that belongs to him; our regard for himself makes every thing that is his, dear to us. If our friend die, or be at a distance from us, how do we value and regard every little present we get from him, and every thing in our possession that belongs to him? What regard do not parents pay to any memorandum they have of their beloved child that is dead? how do they put a little of his hair in a seal or a ring, and value it above measure? how do men esteem the picture of their friend, merely because it is his? Hence the love of God, when it takes place in the soul, never fails to give proof of its presence, by a great respect, and veneration for all holy things and holy persons, on account of their particular connection with God; hence the reverence paid to the sacred scriptures, to churches, to altars, to sacred vessels, to pictures of Christ and his saints, and hence our love and veneration for the saints of Christ themselves, and their holy relicks. And hence in a particular manner arises the love we are commanded to have for our neighbours, because they are so intimately connected with God; as we shall consider more fully below, Chap. xiii.

Q. 7. What are the means by which we may acquire this holy love of God?

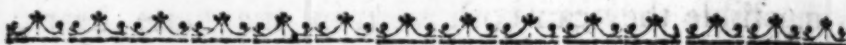
A. (1.) *Fervent prayer.* “The charity of God is poured abroad in our hearts by the holy Ghost.” Rom. v. 5. and “the fruit of the spirit is charity.” Eph. v. 22. It is therefore a gift of God, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Now prayer is declared by Jesus Christ to be a most powerful means to move God to bestow his holy spirit upon us, with all his graces; “If you, being evil, says he, know how

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to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father from heaven give *the good spirit* to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13. (2.) *Self denial and the mortification of self love*; By self love our hearts and affections are placed upon the creatures, and the love of the creatures is wholly opposite to, and destructive of the love of the creator, so that it is impossible they can both reign in the same heart, at the same time; "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other; you cannot serve God and Mammon." Mat. vi. 24. And St John expressly declares, that "If any man love the world, the charity of the father is not in him." 1 Jo. ii. 15. Hence again we see how much we are indebted to Jesus Christ for obliging all his followers to deny themselves, and take off their affections from creatures, and how much he had our real good at heart in doing so; and consequently how careful we should be to break all the unhappy ties of affection that attach us to the creatures and to ourselves, if we want that the holy love of God should reign in our hearts. See above Chap. IV. § 2. (3.) *Frequent meditation on the infinite love of God to us*. Love naturally begets love, and the more we know how much any one loves us, the more forcibly we are drawn to love him. Now it is by frequent meditation on the love of God to us, and the most wonderful effects of his love towards us, that we come to a proper knowledge of the greatness of his love, and to see in the most endearing manner, *how much he loves us!* See above Chap. III. through the whole. (4.) *Frequent meditation on the infinite beauty and perfections of God*; for by this we will come to see and feel how lovely and amiable he is, how much he deserves all the love of our soul, and how unworthy any creature is to possess any place in our heart in comparison of him. Now it is chiefly by contemplating attentively any beautiful object, that our heart contracts an affection for it. See above Chap. V. (5.) *Constant exercise of*

of those duties which his holy love requires from us; studying in all things to please him, avoiding every thing that can displease him, endeavouring continually to do his holy will; and frequently exercising ourselves in making from our hearts fervent acts of love to him.



C H A P. X.

Of Religion.

Q. 1. **W**Hat is meant by religion?

A. Religion is that virtue by which we give to God the honour and worship which is due to him, as the first beginning, the sovereign Lord, and last end of all things; acknowledging, by the proper acts of religion, his supreme excellency and sovereign dominion over us, and our subjection to, and entire dependence upon him. Hence it appears, that the virtue of religion, taken in its full extent, embraces all the duties we owe to God, as contained in the three first commandments, because by each of them we give sovereign worship to God: But those duties which more immediately and properly belong to religion, are devotion, prayer, and adoration; and the acts of other virtues become also acts of religion, only when they are done with the view of honouring God: It is in this sense that St. James says, "This is clean religion and undefiled before God and the father; to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world." Ja. i. 27. Devotion, properly speaking, is a general virtue, and signifies an affectionate readiness of the will to do in all things what we know, or in the simplicity of our heart believe to be agreeable to the will of God, with a view to please him. In this sense we have already

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considered it as a branch of the love of God. See Chap. IX. No. 2. and 3. So that there remain to be explained here, the duties of prayer and adoration.

§ 1. Of Prayer.

Q 2. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is the raising up our hearts to God, to beg his grace and all good things. It is therefore a conversing with God, laying before him all our miseries and necessities, and calling upon him for mercy and relief. It is founded upon faith and hope; for, as the apostle says, "How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?" Rom. x. 14. And St. James tells us, that when we ask any thing of God, we must ask "in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavers needs not expect to receive any thing of the Lord." Ja. i. 6. In fact, we pray to God, because we believe he is able and willing to help us, and because we hope in his sacred promises, that through the merits of Christ, he will help us. Prayer is therefore an act of religion, because by it we acknowledge our own weakness, misery, and unworthiness, our dependence upon God, and our subjection to him; and also, because by it we confess him to be our sovereign Lord, and the giver of all good, and we honour his infinite goodness, from which we hope to obtain what we stand in need of. It is also, like all other good things, a gift of God; for of ourselves we are not *sufficient to think a good thought*, nor can we say, *Lord Jesus, but by the holy spirit*, and therefore God Almighty says, "I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of prayers." Zach. xii. 10. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." Rom. viii. 26. That is, inspireth the saints, and teacheth them to pray with great fervour.

Prayer

Prayer may either be internal or external. *Internal or mental prayer* is that which we make in the heart, addressing our wishes and desires to God internally, without expressing them in words: Of Anna the mother of Samuel it is said, "As Anna had her heart full of grief, she prayed to the Lord, shedding many tears . . . Now Anna spoke in her heart, and only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard at all." 1 Sam. i. 10. 13. David also says, "The meditation of my heart *shall be* always in thy sight, O Lord, my helper and my redeemer." Ps. xviii. 15. And again, "Delight in the Lord, *says he*, and he will give thee the *requests of thy heart*." Ps. xxxvi. 4. *External or vocal prayer*, is that which is made with the mouth, and expressed in words. Of this St. Paul says, "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips, giving glory to his name." Heb. xiii. 15. David also says to God, "Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." Ps. lxii. 5. And of the wise man it is said, "He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the most high. *He will open his mouth in prayer*, and will make supplication for his sins." Eccclus. xxxix. 6.

Q 2. Is the duty of prayer necessary for obtaining salvation?

A. Prayer is one of the most necessary duties of a christian, both for obtaining salvation, and for obtaining every other good thing we need, whether as the means of salvation, or as contributing to our present happiness; and this will appear from the following most convincing reasons.

(1.) This necessity of prayer arises from two important truths, which our holy faith teaches; the first is, that of ourselves, and by our own natural strength, without the special help of God's grace, we cannot do the least thing towards our salvation; nay, that considering the natural proneness of our hearts to evil, the violence of our passions, the many allure-
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ments to sin, to which we are continually exposed from the objects about us, and the constant attacks and snares of our spiritual enemies, who are always going about as roaring lions, seeking to devour us, without a particular assistance of the grace of God, we cannot live for any space of time, without falling into mortal sin. See above, Chap. VIII. Q. 4. And much less, when fallen into that misery, can we ourselves rise out of it again by a sincere repentance. The second truth is, That the ordinary means which God has appointed, by which that so necessary grace is bestowed upon us, is prayer; "Ask, says he, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth." Mat. vii. 7. We are not only incapable of doing any thing towards our salvation without the grace of God; but of ourselves, *who are by nature children of wrath*, we are altogether unworthy of receiving any grace from him. After the fall of man, it was the pure effect of the goodness and mercy of God to be willing to save us, or to shew us any mercy at all; he might, if he had been pleased to do so, have treated us with the same rigorous justice, with which he treated the fallen angels; but he was pleased to show us mercy; and not only to be willing to save us, but also to provide for us all the means necessary for our salvation. Our salvation then, and all the means to obtain it, are the free gifts of God, through the merits of Jesus Christ; and as he is absolute master of his own gifts, he can demand whatever conditions he pleases from us, in order to receive them from him. Now, the first and universal condition which he requires is, that we humble ourselves before him, acknowledge our want of his grace, and our unworthiness of his help, and ask it of his mercy. But whereas we cannot even do this without his assistance, and that the ability to pray is itself a gift of God, as we have seen above, and consequently that the first step to our salvation must come from him, according to what he says in the gospel, "No man can

can come to me, unless it be given him of my father." Jo. vi. 66. And, "No man cometh to the father, but by me." Jo. xiv. 6. Therefore, as "he will have all men to be saved," 1 Tim ii. 4. out of his infinite mercy he freely and generously bestows the grace of prayer upon all men, as the first step towards their salvation, moving them to have recourse to him, and enabling them to do so; but he expressly wills that we should co-operate with this grace, and ask of him whatsoever else we stand in need of, as the condition required on our part for obtaining it. Hence, we find that the first step taken by converted sinners, the first effect which is produced in them by that first grace which moves them to repentance, is to have recourse to God by prayer; thus St Paul, upon his conversion, immediately cries to God, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The humble publican beats his breast and cries, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Cornelius "gave much alms to the people, and prayed always." And all those who wanted any help from Jesus Christ in the gospel, had recourse to him by prayer. Hence it appears, that prayer is the universal efficacious means of obtaining from God all necessary helps for our salvation; it is the key which opens to us all the treasures of heaven; it is the canal through which all graces come to our souls; it is the first grace given us, and the last taken away; and therefore the church of Christ, in one of her general councils, says, "God does not command impossibilities, but by commanding us, (*to do any thing*) he admonishes us to do what we can, *to pray for what help we need*, and then he helps us *to make us able*." Council of Trent, Sess. vi. Chap. 11. What still more fully shows the necessity of prayer is, that the want of it cannot be supplied by any thing else; and in this it differs from all the other means of salvation, and is shown to be the most necessary of any. The want of actual baptism may be supplied by martyrdom; the want of the sacrament of penance by perfect contrition; fasting and peniten-

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cial works, by alms-deeds; alms-deeds themselves, by patient suffering; and so of others: but the want of prayer can be supplied by nothing else; and therefore, the scripture expressly says, "*You have not, because you ask not.*" Ja. iv. 2. *To ask* is appointed by Almighty God to be the assured means of obtaining the graces you stand in need of; and if you neglect to use the means, the graces annexed to that means will not be bestowed, for this plain reason, *because you ask not.* Nor need we be surprized; for when we consider the excellency of those graces, the need we stand in of them, our misery without them, and the easy and certain way by prayer of acquiring them; it shows a most unpardonable contempt and disregard for them, and for the glorious end to be obtained by them, if we neglect to pray for them.

(2.) The necessity of prayer, and our obligation to practise it, arises also from the repeated commands laid down in the holy scriptures. "And Jesus spoke also a parable to them, that *we ought* always to pray, and not to faint." Luke xviii. 1. Where the word *ought* clearly implies a strict obligation. Again, after describing the danger of being called out of this world unprepared, the only means he proposes for avoiding so great a misery is watching in prayer; "Watch ye therefore, praying at all times." Luke xxi. 36. "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is." Mark xiii. 33. The same duty he inculcates, as the means for strengthening us to overcome the many temptations to which we are daily exposed; "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Mat. xxvi. 41. St. Paul again and again inculcates the same duty. "Pray without ceasing, *says he*, in all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all." 1 Thess. v. 17. "And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God; by *all prayer and supplication, praying at all times* in the spirit." Eph. vi. 17. "Be instant in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving."

350 *On the first Command.* Chap. IX.

Colos. iv. 2. "Be nothing solicitous; but in *every thing* by prayer with supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Phil. iv. 6. St. Peter is no less pressing on this subject. "The end of all, *says he*, is at hand, be prudent therefore, and *watch in prayer.*" 1 Pet. iv. 7. "If any of you want wisdom, *says St. James*, let him *ask it of God*, who giveth to all abundantly, and it shall be given him." Jam. i. 5. And again, "Is any of you sad? *let him pray*" Ja. v. 13. Add to all these, what the Holy Ghost commands by the mouth of the wise man, "Let nothing hinder thee from *praying always*, and be not afraid to be justified even to death, for the reward of God continueth for ever." Eccl. xviii. 22. and he tells us that the truly wise man "will *open his mouth in prayer*," and make supplication for his sins." Eccl. xxxix. 7. And by David, "Call upon me, *says God*, in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." Psa. xlix. 15. "And he shall cry to me, and I will hear him; I am with him in his trouble, and I will deliver him." Psa. xc. 15. In Job also it is said, "Thou shalt pray to him, and he will hear thee" Job xxii. 27. Tobias too gives this advice to his son. "Bless God at all times, and desire of him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him." Tobit iv. 20. Upon these repeated testimonies of holy scripture, three things are to be observed. (1.) We see here how frequently, and in all the parts of scripture, this duty is inculcated and urged in the most express terms, which shows beyond contradiction, how strong our obligation is to practise it. (2.) We see prayer commanded in several of these texts, as being the means appointed for obtaining some of the most important graces which we stand in need of, such as, a happy death, final perseverance, strength to resist temptations, pardon of sin, heavenly wisdom to direct us, consolation in sadness, preservation in the state of justice or grace, even to death, and deliverance from our tribulations. (3.) All this shows that the grace of prayer
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itself is never wanting to us ; the frequent command of practising it presupposes we have the grace to do so, and we no-where find any means proposed for obtaining this grace itself ; consequently if we do not use it, the fault is entirely 'our own, and the fatal consequences of such neglect will all be justly laid to our own charge.

(3) This obligation is further confirmed, by the example of Christ himself and all his saints. Of Christ we are told, that " When he had dismissed the multitude, he went up into a mountain alone to pray." Mat. xiv. 23. " And rising very early in the morning, going out he went into a desert place, and there he prayed." Mark i. 35. " And he retired into the desert and prayed." Luke v. 16. So also when he had any business of importance on hand, he began it by prayer ; thus before he chose his twelve apostles, " He went out into a mountain to pray, and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God. And when it was day, he called to him his disciples, and he chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles." Luke vi. 12. In like manner, before he entered upon his passion, he passed three hours in the garden in most fervent prayer. Now why all this ? He surely had no need of praying on his own account ; but he did it for our instruction and example, to show us our necessity of prayer, and how diligent we ought to be in the exercise of so important a duty. For the same reason he also taught us how to pray, and gave us most necessary instructions about the intention which we ought to have in praying. Mat. vi. 5. His apostles, and indeed all his holy servants, those under the law as well as those under the gospel, were no less assiduous in the exercise of this duty, both as to their general practice, and particularly when they had any business of importance on hand, or were in any particular difficulties. Thus the apostles gave the charge of the temporals of the church to the seven deacons, that they might " give themselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word."

Acts vi. 4. When they were preparing themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost, "they all continued with one accord in prayer." Acts i. 14. When they had to choose one to make up their number in place of Judas, two of good repute were presented to them, "and praying they said, Thou Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen." Acts i. 24. When they chose the seven deacons, "praying they imposed their hands upon them." Acts vi. 6. When they had to send Saul and Barnabas upon their mission, "They fasting, and praying, and imposing their hands upon them, sent them away." Acts xiii. 3. When St. Peter was thrown into prison, in order to be put to death, "Prayer was made without ceasing by the church to God for him." Acts xii. 5. When Paul and Silas "were put in prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks: at mid-night praying they praised God, . . . and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and all the doors were opened, and every one's bonds were loosed." Acts xvi. 24. Anna the prophetess is commended in the gospel, because "she departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day." Acts ii. 37. Daniel the prophet chose rather to be thrown into a den of lions than to neglect this duty, three stated times every day. Dan. vi. David rose at midnight to pray to God, and seven times a day at stated hours performed this duty. But it would be endless to mention all the instances of this, which are found throughout the whole scripture, and in all the saints and servants of God. Now why such assiduity, why such continual attention and diligence in these holy souls in performing this duty? For no other reason surely, but because sensible of their own infirmities, and the great need they had of help from God, and of the necessity of recurring to him by prayer for his help, they were thoroughly convinced how great their duty was to do

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fo. And is not our obligation to perform this duty equally strong?

Q. 3. Seeing our obligation to this duty of prayer is so very great, and our necessity for doing it so very urgent, what excuses can those bring who neglect it?

A. There can be no excuse for the neglect of so important a duty; and the only cause of omitting it is our want of good will, and our carelessness about the great affair of salvation. Indeed, those who are guilty of neglecting prayer, bring some frivolous pretexts for this neglect; but these pretexts only show, to their own shame, how little of the spirit of religion is in them. Thus they pretend, (1.) *The want of time*, on account of the multitude and importance of their worldly affairs. But what can be so important as their salvation? What so necessary as prayer, the principal means to secure it? What will all their endeavours avail to get success, even in their worldly affairs, without the blessing of God? See above, Chap. viii.

Q. 14. And how can they obtain this if they neglect to ask it? Is not prayer the principal means to make their affairs prosperous? Where is their faith? What would they think of a person who, wanting to build a house, should prepare stone and lime and wood, and every thing else to build with, but never think of seeking a mason to build it? Besides, how much time do they throw away every day in idleness? in vain amusements? in sin? (2.) *Want of a proper place and convenience*; but Ezechias when sick prayed in his bed; Jeremias in his dungeon; Daniel in the den of lions; Jonah in the whale's belly; the three children in the furnace; Manasses in prison; our Saviour in the garden; the good thief upon the cross; Paul and Silas in the stocks; Stephen amidst the showers of stones; and they were all heard, and their petitions granted. Wherever we are, God is present with us; he resides in our heart, as in his temple, and there is always ready to hear our prayers. (3.) *I am so great a sinner, I am not worthy to pray*; But alas!

the more unworthy we are, the more need we have of prayer ; it is the only resource ; and it is chiefly for such that Christ came to the world, to make up for their unworthiness by his infinite merits. See above, Chap. VIII. Q. 5. Such unworthy sinners are like Job, when he said of himself, " My flesh being consumed, my bone hath cleaved to my skin, and nothing but lips are left about my mouth." Job xix. 20. Lost to all other means of salvation, their only remedy is to use their lips in fervent prayer to God. (4) *But I cannot pray* ; I am ignorant and do not know how to do it. Strange ! That we who are so eloquent in asking help of men in our bodily needs, should be at a loss how to ask help of God for those of our soul ! But who is there that cannot say the Lord's prayer ? It is the best of all others, it contains all that is necessary ; say it, but say it from the heart ; say it frequently ; say it attentively ; and it will suffice. But if we be sensible of our spiritual miseries, and have a sincere desire of their remedy, words will never be wanting, sufficient to obtain mercy. David by one, *I have sinned*, said with a humble and contrite heart, got pardon of two grievous sins of adultery and murder. The humble publican was justified by this short prayer, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, repeated with the same penitential dispositions. *Lord, remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom*, found mercy to the good thief upon the cross. Besides, when you pray, *says our blessed Saviour*, " speak not much, as the heathens do ; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Mat. vi. 7. God requires the desires of the heart more than a multitude of words ; be sensible of your wants, have sincere desires of God's assistance in them, trust in his mercy for relief to them, and you will never be at a loss to find words sufficient to pray with profit.

Q. 4. Is prayer a certain means of obtaining mercy and help from God ?

A. St. James says, " You ask, and you receive not, because you ask amiss," Jam. iv. 3. Which shows,

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shows, that if we pray improperly, either as to the thing we ask, or as to the manner of asking, we need not expect to be heard. But on the other hand, if we ask for a proper object, and in the proper manner, prayer is not only a certain, but it is an infallible means of obtaining what we ask. Nay, God himself speaks in his holy scriptures on this subject in such a way, as shows that prayer does violence in a manner to his heart, and constrains him to grant our requests. Thus when Moses prayed to God for the people, who had fallen into the crime of idolatry by worshipping the golden calf, God said to him, "*Let me alone*, that my wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them." Exod. xxxii. 10. But Moses, who well knew the force and efficacy of prayer, would not let him alone, but prayed with the greater ardour for forgiveness, and at last God yielded the day to Moses, and "was appeased from doing the evil, which he had spoken against his people." ver. 14. here we see that God was resolved to destroy the people, and would certainly have done it, had not the prayers of Moses opposed this resolution, and constrained him to forgive them. In like manner, when provoked by the sins of the Jews, he resolved to cast them away from before his face, he said to Jeremiah, "Therefore do not thou pray for this people, nor take to thee praise and supplication for them, *and do not withstand me.*" Jer. vii. 16. Which last words, *Do not withstand me*, like those above said to Moses, *Let me alone*, manifestly show that such is the force and efficacy of prayer, that it can withstand the wrath of God, and in a manner constrain him to peace and pardon. This is further manifested, by what the wise man says of the prayer of the humble man, that it "shall pierce the clouds, and till it come nigh it will not be comforted, and it will not depart till the most high behold." Eccl. xxxv. 21. Where we see that prayer, when properly performed, is obstinate before God, importunes him, and will take no denial nor turn away till its request be granted.

Q. 5. These are surely most amazing truths, but being declared by God himself, are no less certain than wonderful; but whence comes it that prayer has such a surprising influence with the Almighty God?

A. This arises from two reasons. (1.) *The repeated promises of God*, by which he has engaged his sacred word, his truth and his fidelity, to grant our requests, when we pray as we ought to him. "I say unto you, *says Jesus Christ*, ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." Luke xi. 9. Is it possible to make a more clear and express promise than this is? and he confirms it with his usual asseveration, *I say unto you*. I who am truth itself, and who am infinitely powerful, able to make good whatever I say, *I say to you, ask and it shall be given you*. In the same manner he says, on another occasion, "Therefore *I say to you*, whatsoever you ask, when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." Mark xi. 24. Could Christ himself engage his word in more universal terms? "I go to the father, *says he again*, and whatsoever you shall ask the father in my name, that will I do, that the father may be glorified in the son. If you shall ask me any thing in my name, that I will do." Jo. xiv. 13. So also, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." Jo. xv. 7. But whereas the apostles had not made the proper use of these repeated promises, he afterwards renews them with a more solemn asseveration, and exhorts them to ask, that their hearts may rejoice. "*Amen, amen, I say unto you*, if you ask the father any thing in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked any thing in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." Jo. xvi. 23. (2.) *The efficacy of prayer rises also from the infinite goodness, liberality, and mercy of God*, by which he is most power-

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fully inclined to communicate himself and all good things to his beloved creatures, whom he has made on purpose to be happy in the enjoyment of himself for ever ; and nothing puts a stop to this inconceivable propensity which he has, to bestow all good things upon us, but the want of the proper dispositions in our souls for receiving them. When therefore we pray in the proper manner, and with the proper dispositions, this impediment to the effects of his goodness is taken away, and a door is opened in our soul, by which every good thing we ask for gets admittance. On this subject our Saviour himself speaks as follows. " What man is there among you, of whom if his son ask bread, will he reach him a stone ? Or if he ask a fish, will he reach him a serpent ? If then you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children ; how much more will your father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him ? " Mat. vii. 9. A most convincing argument indeed ! for if men, though evil and imperfect, cannot resist the just requests of their children ; how much less will God, who is infinitely good, infinitely merciful, infinitely liberal, infinitely beneficent, infinitely propense to do us good, be able to resist the humble prayers of his servants, or refuse to bestow those good things upon them, which they ask of him ? Now can Jesus Christ lie ? can he break his word ? Can he fail in his promises ? No, no, that is impossible : " God is not as a man, that he should lie ; nor as the son of man, that he should be changed. Hath he said then, and will he not do ? hath he spoken, and will he not fulfil ? " Numb. xxiii. 19. Hence therefore, it is infallibly certain, that when we pray to God for *his good things*, and do so in the proper manner, our prayers shall be heard, and these good things shall be granted us : yea, this is as certain, as it is certain that Jesus Christ cannot break his word, and that God cannot go back in his promise.

Q. 6. Are there any examples in scripture of this powerful efficacy of prayer ?

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A. The scripture is full of such examples. Thus, (1.) Rebecca the wife of Isaac was barren, "And Isaac besought the Lord for his wife, because she was barren, and he heard him, and made Rebecca to conceive." Gen. xxv. 21. So also Anna the mother of Samuel, had been long barren, and suffered many reproaches on that account, and she prayed to God, as we have seen above, and he heard her; and when she presented her son in the temple, she said to the high priest Eli, "For this child did I pray, and the Lord hath granted my petition, which I asked of him." 1 Sam. i. 27. (2.) When king Ezechias was sick to death, the prophet Isaías went to him and said, "Thus saith the Lord God, give charge concerning thy house, for thou shalt die and not live. And he turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord . . . And before Isaías was gone out of the middle of the court, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Go back and tell Ezechias, the captain of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, and I have seen thy tears; and behold I have healed thee; on the third day thou shalt go up to the temple of the Lord; and I will add to thy days fifteen years." 4 Kings xx. 1. (3.) "Elias was a man passible, like unto us, *says St. James*, and with prayer he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth, and it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." Ja. v. 17. (4.) King Herod, "when he had apprehended St. Peter, cast him into prison, delivering him to four files of soldiers to be kept, intending after the patch to bring him forth to the people. But prayer was made without ceasing by the church to God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth the same night . . . the Lord sent his angel, *who took him out of prison, in a most miraculous manner*, and delivered him out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." Acts xii. 4. 11.

(5.) The example of Moses related above, Q. 4. is most amazing; but it were endless to relate all that are found in scripture of this kind, every book almost being full of them.

Q. 7. What are the conditions required to make our prayers agreeable to God, and efficacious in obtaining what we ask of him?

A. Oh this indeed is a most important subject, as it is for want of some one or other of these conditions that our prayers are rendered fruitless, and hindered from having the effect which we desire. Now there are several conditions required upon our part, which therefore must be carefully attended to. They are as follows:

(1.) *To be in friendship with God, and free from the guilt of sin.* When a person lives in the guilt of known sin, and in disgrace with God, his soul is utterly incapable of receiving his heavenly gifts, and he is positively unworthy of receiving any favour from him; and the holy scripture assures us, that nothing is a greater hindrance to our prayers being heard, than to live in such a state at enmity with God; David tells us that "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears unto their prayers; but the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, so cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Ps. xxxiii. 17. And God himself says to all such, "When you stretch forth your hands I will turn away my eyes from you; and when you multiply prayer I will not hear; for your hands are full of blood." Is. i. 15. that is, your souls are defiled with the guilt of your sins, which render you hateful to me, like a person whose hands are reeking with the blood of his neighbour whom he has murdered. So also, Isaiah says to sinners, "Your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he should not hear." Is. lix. 2. Hence, Jeremias laments the sins of his people in these words, "We have done wickedly and provoked thee to wrath; therefore thou art inexorable . . . thou

thou hast set a cloud before thee, that our prayer may not pass through." Lament. iii. 42. 44. Nay, the wise man declares, that "He that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination." Prov. xxviii. 9. It is true indeed, that though a person has been ever so great a sinner, yet if he returns to God with a sincere repentance and cries for mercy, his prayer will be heard, and the scripture is full of the most encouraging assurances to all such; thus, "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call upon him, while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he is bountiful to forgive." Is. lv. 6. And the examples of the humble publican and the prodigal son, with other such, show clearly how ready Almighty God is to hear the prayers of the greatest sinners, when they return to him and cry for mercy; but to be intitled to all the glorious effects of prayer, and to the sacred promises which Jesus Christ makes to hear our prayers, we must leave off our evil ways, and be in friendship with him; and this condition is expressly made to these promises. Thus, "If you abide in me, says Jesus Christ, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." Jo. xv. 7. "He that loveth God shall obtain pardon for his sins by prayer, and shall refrain himself from them, and shall be heard in the prayer of days." Eccles. iii. 4. "Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart." Ps. xxxvi. 4. "Dearly beloved, says St. John, if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God, and whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." 1 Jo. iii. 21. And therefore St. James assures us, that "the continual prayer of a just man availeth much." Jo. v. 16.

(2.) *That the things we pray for, be conducive to our salvation, and according to the will of God.* We have

have seen above Chap. V. Q. 8. No. 2. that the great end which God had in view in creating this universe, and in all he has done in it, whether in the order of nature or in the order of grace, is the salvation of souls ; and that all the good things he has bestowed upon us in this life, are intended only as helps or means to enable us to secure this great end of our being. Hence the riches and enjoyments of this world, if they be so used as to promote our salvation, are real goods to us, but if we abuse them to the hurt of our souls, they become real evils ; And on the contrary, if the miseries and sufferings of this life are so used as to be of service to our souls, however afflicting they may be in the mean time to our nature, they are in fact real goods ; but if we abuse them to the loss of our souls, they are real evils. We have also seen above, that the salvation of our soul is the only important affair that we have to think of ; that it is of no manner of consequence, what way we be in, while in this valley of tears, whether in wealth or poverty, in sickness or health ; in ease or pain, provided we can only save our souls ; but that if we lose our souls, all is lost for ever. Finally, we have further seen, Chap. IV. Q. 3. No. 5. that considering the corruption of our nature by sin, it is much more difficult to save our souls amidst the plenty and abundance of worldly enjoyments, than with a moderate sufficiency of the necessities of life, or even amidst sufferings and afflictions. From these undoubted principles it follows ; That the great and continual object of our desires, and consequently of our prayers, ought to be our eternal salvation, and all these goods which are necessary for securing it, such as victory over our passions, grace to resist temptations, the living free from sin, our advancement in virtue, patience in our sufferings, union with the will of God, final perseverance by a happy death, and the like. And we are absolutely certain that all these things are according to the will of God, and what he is most ready to grant us, because “ He wills all men to be saved.” 1 Tim. ii.

ii. 4. But as for the good things of this world, or the being delivered from its evils, a christian ought never to desire them for themselves, nor pray for them, but only as far as God sees they may be of use to his soul. We have seen, Chap. IV. Q. 4. how strongly Jesus Christ forbids his followers to set their hearts upon these things, or seek their happiness in them; how strictly he enjoins them, by mortification and self denial, to take off their affections from them; while at the same time he passes his sacred promise to them that, if they do so, he will take care to supply them with such a sufficiency of the goods of this life, as will be necessary for their support, and of no hurt but of service to their souls. See Chap. IV. Q. 7. From all which it is manifest, that (1.) When we pray for the salvation of our souls and those graces which are conducive to, or necessary for obtaining it, we may depend upon being heard, when, in what manner, and in what proportion God sees best for us; because it is only to these goods that all the promises of hearing our prayers are made. (2.) When we pray for temporal goods, the promises of hearing such prayers are only conditional; if God sees it for the good of our souls, he will grant what we ask; if not, he will refuse it; unless in punishment of our too great anxiety for, and attachment to these goods, he should grant in his anger what he would refuse in his mercy. Hence, (3.) We may and ought to pray for the former goods, with all the ardour of our soul, and with all confidence of being heard, and without any condition. But (4.) with regard to our temporal necessities, we should either not ask for them at all, but humbly laying all such necessities before God, leave it to him by a holy resignation to his will to do as he sees best; or if we do ask for them, as it is certainly laudable and lawful to do so, we ought to ask them only as secondary and accessory means of salvation, and always with this condition, if God sees it for the good of our souls, and only in as far as he sees so, but with an entire resignation to his

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his will to give them or not as he pleases. All this is confirmed by repeated testimonies of scripture, thus, "*Be not solicitous* therefore, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the heathens seek: for your father knows that you have need of all those things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added to you." Matth. vi. 31. Again, "Amen amen I say to you, if you ask the father any thing in my name, he will give it you." Jo. xv. 23. Now what can we ask in the name of the saviour, but what conduces to our salvation? Would it not be injuring him, to ask any thing in his name which would be hurtful to our souls? and would he be a saviour to us, if he should grant such a prayer? "If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more will your father who is in heaven give *good things* to them that ask them?" Matth. vii. 11. Now what are *good things* in the judgment of God? Surely only such as are for the good of the soul. Would it be receiving good things from God, if we ask him for what he knows would make us eternally miserable, and he should grant them? Is it his will to give us such goods? And would it be asking according to his will, if we should pray for such? Now it is upon asking according to his will that our confidence of being heard must be founded; hence St John says, "This is the confidence which we have towards him, that whatsoever we shall ask *according to his will*, he heareth us; and we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask; we know we have the petitions which we request of him." 1 Jo. v. 14. But as for temporal goods, or the being delivered from temporal evils, Christ himself shows us by his own example, that we should pray for them only conditionally, and with resignation; for being oppressed with sorrow in the garden at the sight of the dreadful chalice of sufferings he was going to endure, he prayed thus, "Father if it be possible, let this chalice pass from

me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Mat. xxvi. 39. and again, "Father, if thou wilt, remove this chalice from me, but yet not my will, but thine be done." Luke xxii. 42. Where we see both, that it is laudable and lawful to pray for temporal favours, but that all such prayers ought to be made with perfect resignation to the will of God, and on condition that he sees proper to grant them. We must pray for them, because prayer is the necessary means to obtain them, as well as all other good things; but we must leave it entirely to God to grant them or not as he sees fit, because we are perfectly ignorant, whether it would be good for us to have them or not. But in all such cases we ought to be firmly persuaded, that if he does not think fit to grant the very thing we ask, he will grant us something else that he sees better for us; for prayer can never be fruitless; it is a promise made by Christ himself, that "Every one that asketh (*properly*) receiveth." Mat. vii. 8. and when we ask temporal goods in the way Christ did, we surely ask *properly*, and therefore, receive we shall, if not the very thing we ask, something better for us. Thus St Paul thrice besought the Lord to be delivered from the angel of satan that was given to buffet him, and was denied that favour; but he received a much greater one; a plentiful grace to support him, and enable him to overcome that enemy with great fruit to his soul.

(3.) That we *pray with attention and fervour*. These two qualities of good prayer are joined together, because they naturally arise from, and are accompanied by one another. Prayer, properly speaking, consists in two things; to wit, the desires of our heart for some good thing, and the manifesting those desires to God: and it is evident, that if either of these two be wanting, there is no prayer. Now this manifestation of our desires to God may be either by the heart alone, and this is to *pray mentally*, or they may be expressed also in words, and this is to *pray vocally*.

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The foundation then of prayer are the desires of the heart; it is by them that the heart is dilated and disposed for receiving the things we pray for; according to that of our Saviour, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." Mat. v. 6. These desires arise from the high esteem we have for the good things we wish; the greater and more fervent our desires for any good are, the more they show how great our esteem is of it; but if our desires be weak and languid, our esteem must be but little. Now as the good things of God are of inestimable value in themselves, he requires of us to have a great esteem for them, and of course an ardent desire of them; this high esteem and fervent desire is what moves him in a particular manner to bestow his gifts upon us; thus "the Lord hath heard the desire of the poor; thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart." Ps. x. 17. (Heb.) "In thy strength, O Lord, the king shall joy; and in thy salvation he shall rejoice exceedingly; *thou hast given him his heart's desire*; and thou hast not withholden from him the will of his lips." Ps. xx. i. "That which the wicked feareth, shall come upon him; to the just *their desire shall be given*." Prov. x. 24. And when Daniel "set his face to make supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes," and to pray for his people with great fervour, which he showed both in the expressions of his prayer itself, and in these penitential works with which he accompanied it, at last the angel Gabriel appeared to him, and said, "O Daniel, I am now come forth to teach thee, and that thou mightest understand. From the beginning of thy prayers the word came forth: and I am come to shew it to thee, because *thou art a man of desires*." Dan. ix. 3. 22. But when a person has no esteem for the good things of God, when he has no great desire about them, when he prefers the perishable things of this life before them, and is more solicitous about these than about the concerns of eternity, he is then totally indisposed for receiving the gifts of God; and though

he should say some prayers for the good of his soul, yet these prayers being languid, cold and heartless, and he himself being as it were indifferent whether he receives them or not; such prayers are rather loathsome to God than pleasing, and more apt to move him to indignation than to pity, seeing they show a contempt of him and of his eternal goods, and that the preference is given to the world before him. Hence it is manifest that our prayers must proceed from a heart inflamed with an ardent desire of these inestimable goods which we ask from God, just as the incense, which in scripture is proposed as an emblem of fervent prayer, then sends up its clouds of sweet smelling smoke towards heaven, when itself is burning upon the fire in the censer. Hence David says, "Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight; the lifting up of my hands as evening sacrifice." Ps. cxi. 2. And such are the prayers of all the saints of God, of whom we are told, that "the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, from the hand of the angel." Apoc. viii. 4. Now when we manifest these desires to God mentally, and in the heart alone; though in some high degrees of supernatural prayer, the imagination may sometimes be carried away with various distractions, even while the heart and will are exercising the most fervent affections towards God, yet for ordinary this is not the case; but our very expressing our desires to God, in our heart, naturally draws the attention of the mind along with it. But the case is very different in our vocal prayers, for there it but too often happens, that we recite with our lips those words which express the desires of the heart, whilst our mind is wandering about on a thousand idle and worldly objects, and the heart itself is perhaps engaged in affections very different from, and sometimes even contrary to those which the words contain. These distractions of the mind in our vocal prayers may arise from three different causes. (1.) *From the devil*, who knowing the immense advantage of prayer

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to the soul, endeavours by every means in his power either to hinder us from applying to it at all, by putting a thousand impediments in our way, engaging us in a multitude of worldly cares and amusements, and giving us a backwardness and aversion to prayer; or if he cannot hinder us from practising it, he endeavours to hinder the good effects of it, by filling our mind in time of prayer with a thousand wild impertinent imaginations and wandering thoughts, so as sometimes to put into our mind in time of prayer things that never had entered into our thoughts at any other time. (2.) *From bodily infirmity, the natural weakness of our mind in our present corrupted state; and the instability of our imagination;* all which is so great that we can scarce so much as repeat the Lord's prayer, but some wandering thought will present itself to our mind in time of it; for "the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things." Wild. ix. 15. This natural indisposition to prayer is greatly augmented by our attachments to creatures, and our occupying our minds so continually in our worldly affairs and amusements; for by this means these objects make a deep impression upon the imagination, are always present to the mind, and so fill the heart, that it can scarce apply itself to any thing else. (3.) *From ourselves;* when in time of prayer we either voluntarily set our thoughts upon worldly objects, or knowingly entertain them when they are suggested to our mind by either of the two former causes. Now when distracting thoughts are borne in upon our mind in time of prayer against our will, either by suggestions of the enemy, or the infirmity of our nature, and we endeavour, as we best can, to drive them away, and to keep our mind attentive to the presence of God, with whom we are conversing, and to the subject of our prayer, these distractions, though ever so importunate, will be of no hurt to the soul, nor hinder our prayers from being heard by our good God, who, "know-

368 *On the first Command.* Chap. X.

ing our frame, and remembering that we are but dust,"
 Pl. cii. 4. pities our weakness in this day of battle;
 assists us with his grace to keep our heart upright with
 him, and will reward our fidelity in fighting manfully
 against such temptations. But the case is very
 different with those distractions which arise from the
 third cause; for if, while we are pretending to honour
 God by reciting our prayers, we should either of our-
 selves set our thoughts a wandering upon improper
 objects, or knowingly entertain those that are sugges-
 ted by the devil or our own imagination, without
 giving any attention to God, and what our lips are
 saying to him; this must be highly displeasing to God,
 and will render our prayers not only fruitless but hurt-
 ful to us. Such pretended prayer is in fact no pray-
 er at all, it is mere hypocrisy, it wants the foundation
 of prayer, which is the desire of the heart; it is a pre-
 tending to manifest to God the desires of the heart, by
 the words we repeat, whilst the heart has no desire at
 all of what the words express, but perhaps is occupied
 with affections displeasing to God; to such prayer is
 justly applied the reproach made by *Isaias* the prophet,
 and which our blessed Saviour throws up to the Jews,
 "ye hypocrites, well has *Isaias* prophesied of you, say-
 ing, This people honoureth me with their lips; but
 their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me.
 Math. xv. 7. Of such also *David* says, "they loved him
 with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied
 unto him: But their heart was not right with him."
 Pl. lxxvii. 36. Hence therefore it is manifest, that if
 we want our prayers should be acceptable to God and
 profitable to ourselves, we must take care they flow
 from a fervent heart, burning with an earnest desire
 of obtaining from him those inestimable favours which
 we pray for, and which will conduct us to eternal
 bliss; and at the same time that we must say them with
 all possible attention of mind; using the proper means,
 and our best endeavours to avoid all distracting
 thoughts in time of prayer, and to keep our mind
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whom we speak, and to the good things we ask of him. Now the means to be used for this purpose are. (1.) "Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God." Eccl. xviii. 23. This preparation consists in considering before-hand what we are going to do; with whom we are going to speak; and upon what subject, to wit, the concerns of our soul; in calling to mind the presence of God; in directing our intention to God, offering up what we are about to do, purely in obedience to his will, and for his honour and glory; in humbling ourselves before him as incapable of praying as we ought, and begging his assistance to enable us to perform that duty so as to please him; and this will be the proper defence against the assaults of our spiritual enemies. (2.) To divest ourselves as much as possible of all solicitude and anxiety about the concerns of this life; to avoid all such unnecessary employments and vain amusements, as fill the imagination with idle and vain ideas of the creatures, and carry away the heart to a fondness for them; and, by often reading and meditating on holy subjects, to imprint deeply in the mind and heart a high idea of them, and a love and affection for them: and this will be the best cure for the infirmity of nature. (3.) To use a proper resolution and force with ourselves, to keep up a lively sense of the divine presence, during the time of prayer, and the moment we observe any distracting thought appear, immediately to reject it with disdain, whatever alluring appearance it may put on, humbling ourselves before God, and renewing our actual attention to his presence: and this will effectually preserve our will from all voluntary consent to whatever distractions may be presented to our mind from either of the former causes.

(4.) The fourth condition required, to make our prayer efficacious, is, that *it be humble*; that is, *void of all presumption* upon ourselves, or upon any merits of our own, as if we either could acquire any good by our own natural abilities, or had any thing in our-

ourselves that could deserve it from God. This is a most essential quality of prayer, and the want of it is what more than any thing else will hinder God from granting what we pray for. It is founded upon two great truths, which we never can have too deeply impressed in our mind. The first is, that of ourselves we can do no good towards our salvation, neither resist temptations, nor break ill habits, nor avoid sin, nor acquire any virtue, nor persevere in good; nor, in a word, do any that is acceptable in the sight of God. The second truth is, that of ourselves we deserve no help, no grace, nor any good thing from him; nay, that on account of our manifold sins, ingratitude and infidelity to him, we deserve nothing but stripes and punishments, and to be rejected by him entirely. That therefore we must never presume or have any dependence upon ourselves for obtaining any good, but expect it only from his goodness and mercy, through the merits of our blessed Saviour. This holy disposition greatly increases the fervour of the soul; for we are never more earnest in desiring any good, than when we are thoroughly convinced of the greatness of our want of it, and at the same time it powerfully moves God to grant what we desire. This he declares by his prophet. "To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?" Isa. lxvi. 2. "For thus saith the High and the Eminent, that inhabiteth eternity, and his name is holy, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, and with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite." Isa. lvii. 15. for "a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psa. l. 19. And therefore, "he hath regard to the prayer of the humble, and he hath not despised their petition." Psa. ci. 18. "for the Lord is nigh to them that are of a contrite heart, and he will save the humble of spirit." Psa. xxxiii. 19. but "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Ja. iv. 6. The holy servants of
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God were most sensible of this truth, and therefore in all their prayers which are recorded in scripture, especially in times of distress, we find they were all grounded in this holy virtue. Thus Judith says, "Thy power, O God, is not in a multitude, nor is thy pleasure in the strength of horses, nor from the beginning have the proud been acceptable to thee, but *the prayer of the humble and meek hath always pleased thee . . .* hear me a *poor wretch*, making supplication to thee, and *presuming of thy mercy*." Judith ix. 16. In like manner Esther "covered her head with ashes and dung, and she humbled her body with fasts . . . and she prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, saying, O my Lord, who alone art our king, help me a *desolate woman*, who have *no other helper* but thee." Esther xiv. 2. Daniel also, in his fervent prayer, which brought an angel from heaven to tell him what he wanted to know, says, "Incline, O my God, thy ear, and hear; open thy eyes and see our desolation . . . for it is not in our justifications that we present our prayers before thy face, but for the multitude of thy tender mercies." Dan. ix. 18. The different effects of the prayers of the humble publican, and of the proud Pharisee, are well known, and the prayer of the prodigal son, by which he found favour with his father, was wholly founded in humility. Hence the wise man assures us, that, "The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds; and till it come nigh, it will not be comforted, and will not depart till the most high behold: and the Lord will not be slack." Eccl. xxxv. 21. And the reason why humility is so powerful a means to find mercy with him, is because by it we give due honour to his almighty power, according to that, "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God; for great is the power of God alone, *and he is honoured by the humble*." Eccl. iii. 20. Now though every christian knows and believes the above two truths, upon which this humility of our prayers is founded, and on that account

count may be said to have humility of the understanding ; yet such is the unhappy pride of our heart, that notwithstanding the conviction we have of our own weakness and unworthiness, still we feel our heart revolts at that truth, wishes always to have some good opinion of ourselves, as if there was something in us of our own, and which we have not from God, and is carried away as it were by violence to presume upon itself, and have a dependence on its own forces. To counteract the fatal effects of this unhappy disposition, it is a most useful practice not only at the beginning of prayer, but also of every other duty we have to do, to make an act of profound humility before God, expressly confessing our own inability to do it well without his assistance, and our unworthiness of any help from him ; and renouncing all confidence in ourselves, throw ourselves entirely upon his mercy for what we need ; and experience will show, that when this is done sincerely and from the heart, how powerful a benediction it brings from God. But we observed in all the above examples of the humble prayers of the saints, that while they rejected all trust or confidence in themselves, they presumed wholly upon the mercy of God ; and therefore,

(5.) The fifth quality of prayer is, that this humble diffidence in ourselves be accompanied with a perfect trust and confidence in God, grounded solely upon his infinite goodness, his fidelity to his promises, and the merits of Jesus Christ. This confidence or hope in God is a virtue which resides partly in the understanding, and partly in the will. *In the understanding* ; because we firmly believe that God is exceedingly disposed and inclined by his own infinite goodness, and has bound himself by promise, to grant us the good things we ask. *In the will* ; because adhering to this well founded belief, we undoubtedly hope, without hesitation or suspicion of the contrary, that God will actually grant our demands ; and being animated with this firm hope and confidence, we present our petitions to God with greater fervour of spirit,

spirit, and most agreeable to all abrogation given him. For which is fore let n of the L see the fir nothing confidence hope, and for the a a humb Chap. No. 4. of the go vant's he sect com make Je and gran viii. 8.

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(6.) A which is accompan God. T

spirit, and with a holy importunity, which to him is most agreeable. Hence St. James says, "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask *in faith, nothing wavering*. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is driven and tossed about by the wind; therefore let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Jam. i. 5. Let him ask *in faith*; see the firm belief of the goodness and fidelity of God: *nothing wavering*; see here the unshaken hope and confidence of the will. But as prayer is the child of hope, and the proper exercise of that virtue, see above, for the admirable effects of prayer, when it rises from a humble heart, and is winged with a lively hope, Chap. VIII. § 2. through the whole, and § 3. No. 4. We may only further add here, the example of the good centurion, who in his prayer for his servant's health joined a profound humility with a perfect confidence, in so admirable a manner, as to make Jesus Christ himself express his surprize at it, and grant him that instant what he prayed for, Mat. viii. 8. Which shows how agreeable it is to God that we have an entire confidence in him, and presume, as the scripture expresses it, of his mercy, when we are not conscious of any thing in ourselves to put a stop to it. But on the contrary, it is a great injury and affront to God to have any diffidence in him; as it manifestly includes a supposition most injurious to his goodness; namely, that though he can, without the least trouble, and only by willing it, relieve us and assist us in what is really good for us, yet even when we apply to him for it, he will not do it; it also involves a heinous affront to his veracity, by supposing he is capable of not performing his repeated promises to hear our prayers and grant our pious requests.

(6.) Another most necessary quality of prayer, and which is the crown of all the former, is *perseverance, accompanied with a humble resignation to the will of God*. Though Almighty God has bound himself by pro-

promise to grant us those good things which we ask of him in prayer, and which are conducive to our salvation; yet he has not bound himself to give us them, the very moment we ask them, nor yet in such manner or measure as we may ask, which perhaps may not always be the best for our souls. God is pleased indeed sometimes to hear our prayers immediately; at other times he wants to be intreated for days, and weeks, and months, and years; sometimes he is pleased to grant us at once the whole of what we ask; at other times, he imparts it by little and little, and as it were insensibly. Sometimes the thing we ask, though holy and good in itself, may not be so proper for us in our present dispositions and circumstances, and God in his infinite mercy is pleased to refuse that, but rewards our prayers with something better for us; now as to all these circumstances we must be perfectly resigned to whatever God pleases; it is enough for us to know that all is intended by his infinite wisdom for our greater good, which he alone knows how to promote; and that if we persevere in our prayer, sooner or later he will grant us our hearts desire in the way, manner, and measure that he knows best for us. And indeed who are we, to set a time to the favours of God? When Judith had heard that Ozias the ruler of the people had agreed to give up the city to Holofernes, who was besieging it, if within five days God did not relieve them, she said to him and the other rulers, "What is this word by which ye have consented to give up the city to the Assyrians, if within five days there come no aid to us? And who are you that tempt the Lord? This is not a word that may draw down mercy; but rather that may stir up wrath, and enkindle indignation. You have set a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed him a day according to your pleasure! But for as much as the Lord is patient, let us be penitent for this same thing; and with many tears, let us beg his pardon... let us humble our souls before him, and, continuing in an humble spirit in his service, let us ask the Lord with

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with tears, that *according to his will, so he would shew his mercy towards us*" Judith viii. 10. The high priest Eliachim's behaviour upon this same occasion, was very different from that of these rulers; for he "went about all Israel and spoke to them, saying, Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, *if you continue with perseverance* in fastings and prayers, in the sight of the Lord." Judith iv. 11. And indeed there is nothing that our blessed Saviour seems more earnest to inculcate to us, than to persevere in our prayers to God; the parable of the two friends is expressly intended for this purpose; and he concludes it with these words, "Yet if he shall continue knocking, *I say to you*, although he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend; yet because of his importunity he will rise, and give him as many loaves as he needeth." And then he immediately adds, "And I say to you, Ask and it shall be given you," &c. Luke. xi. 8. thereby showing us that this sacred promise of granting what we ask is principally made to our perseverance in asking. And no wonder that perseverance should at last be victorious; for if it could even move the heart of the friend, and against his will, to do what was displeasing to him, and grant what was asked of him; how much more must it move the heart of God, who is all goodness, who takes a delight to bestow his good things upon us, and who only delays granting them, that he may grant them afterwards more to our advantage, and as a reward of our very perseverance? The parable of the unjust judge and the widow was used by our Saviour, on purpose to show us, *that we ought always to pray, and not to faint*, Luke xviii. 1. that is, to persevere, without wearying, though God should delay hearing us; for that coming, he will come at last and grant us all we desire; and the example of the Chanaan woman, with the happy fruits of her perseverance, is recorded at large for our encouragement and imitation. When she first presented her prayer to our blessed Saviour, he seemed not to mind her, and

answered her not a word; she persisted, and the disciples begged him to send her away, as being troublesome. But he seemed to despise her, as having nothing to do with her, saying, *I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel.* She, far from being discouraged by this apparent contempt, persisted with greater fervour, for *she came and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me.* He still seemed unmoved, and said, *It is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs;* but she, not in the least disturbed at this humiliating expression, humbled herself the more, persisted the more, and even from what he said drew an argument in her own favour. True, said she, it is so; I acknowledge myself a dog, and unworthy of being treated as a child, but let me have at least what the dogs get, *for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their master.* O then indeed our Saviour's tender heart could resist no longer; the justice of her petition, which was the cure of her daughter who was grievously troubled by a devil, her fervour, her humility, her confidence, her perseverance, made such a powerful assault upon him, that turning unto her, he said; *O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt: and her daughter was cured from that hour.* Mat. xv. 22. How strong an encouragement does all this give us, never to faint, never to weary, never to give over knocking at the door of the divine mercy, till at last it be opened to us to our great consolation? How does it teach us, rather to increase our fervour, our humility, and our confidence in him, when he seems not to hear us, with the firm persuasion that perseverance in these virtues will at last gain the day. "Do not therefore lose your confidence, says St. Paul, which hath a great reward: for patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise." Heb. x. 35. When God delays granting what we ask, it is his will we should persevere with confidence and
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patience, and in his good time the promised reward will without doubt be given us.

When now we reflect on the continual need we have of the help of God, at all times, in every thing we do, and on the infallible efficacy of holy prayer in obtaining for us all seasonable aid from him, we cannot wonder at the repeated injunctions given in the holy scripture, to watch without intermission in this holy exercise. See above, Q. 2. No. 2. But we can never sufficiently deplore and admire the negligence, aversion, and backwardness of the most part of mankind to this duty. May Almighty God open our eyes to see this folly, and pour out upon all men the holy *spirit of prayer*; for in giving them that, he will undoubtedly give them by its means all good things.

Q. 8. Is it a duty to pray for others as well as for ourselves?

A. Those who have the charge of others souls, as pastors, parents, masters of families, &c. are strictly obliged in justice as well as in charity, to pray for those under their charge. And are all obliged in charity to pray for one another's salvation, according to the command of the apostle, "Pray for one another, that you may be saved." Ja. v. 6. For "God gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbour." Ecclus. xvii. 12. In the gospel we are expressly commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves, and consequently to wish and pray for his salvation as well as for our own: Nay, we are commanded to love our neighbours as Christ loved us, and consequently to pray for their salvation as Christ prayed for ours. St. John goes still farther, and says, "In this we have known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us: and *we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren.*" 1 Jo. iii. 16. Namely, if at any time the salvation of their souls should require it; and if so, how much more ought we to pray for their salvation? Now such prayers are most acceptable to God, having the splen-

dour of charity added to their own intrinſick value; and if they be made with proper diſpoſitions as above laid down, it is not to be doubted but they are moſt profitable both to thoſe who make them, and to thoſe for whom they are made; and there are numbers of examples in the hiſtories of the ſaints, of the converſions of the greateſt of ſinners being obtained by this means, witneſs of St. Paul by the prayers of St. Stephen; and the example of the Chanaanean woman, by whoſe prayers her daughter was delivered from the oppreſſion of the devil.

§ 2. *Of the Adoration and Worſhip of God.*

Q. 9. What is meant by the adoration or worſhip of God?

A. The adoration of God properly conſiſts in this, that we, conſidering on the one hand our own extreme nothingneſs and miſery, and on the other, the infinite majeſty of the divinity, humble ourſelves exceedingly, and annihilate ourſelves in his preſence, exalting him above all things, and abaſing ourſelves before him. It contains an act both of the underſtanding and of the will, of the ſpirit and of the heart. Hence, to adore God is to acknowledge him to be a being of infinite majeſty and of infinite perfection, and in conſequence of that, to exalt him with all our heart and affections, and to humble ourſelves as a mere nothing before him. It is, to acknowledge him to be the author and giver of all good, on whom we totally depend for our being itſelf and every thing elſe, and in conſequence of that, to abandon ourſelves totally to his divine providence, with an entire dependence on him. It is, to acknowledge him to be our firſt beginning and laſt end, and in conſequence of that, to adhere to him with all the affections of our ſoul. It is, to acknowledge him to be our ſupreme Lord and maſter, who has the moſt abſolute
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and unalienable dominion over us, and is sole master of life and death, and in consequence of that, to subject ourselves to him by a perfect obedience to his will. This adoration then contains two parts; to be firmly persuaded in our understanding, that God is what he is, which is, *to worship or adore God in spirit*; and to render him all those affections of our heart and will, and that obedience of our whole person, which are essentially due to him, on account of what he is, which is, *to worship or adore him in truth*. It is either internal or external. *Internal adoration* is when we actually exercise in our interior all these dispositions of the soul just mentioned; and its proper acts are exaltation of God, and humiliation of ourselves, submission and dependence. *External adoration* is, when by the outward actions of the body, we testify externally those inward dispositions of the soul; and its acts are praising and exalting God by our words, and all those actions of the body, which either in themselves or in the common estimation of mankind, signify humiliation, submission, and dependence on our part, and the giving honour and respect to him, such as kneeling, prostration, stretching out the hands, uncovering the head, bowing down the body, the offering incense, and sacrifice.

Q. 9. Are we obliged to worship and adore God in this manner?

A It is our bounden duty to do so; we are obliged to it by our very being as creatures; God has an unalienable right to our adoration from his own infinite excellency, and from his supreme dominion over us; and therefore he expressly requires it from us. "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve." Mat. v. 10. And "the true adorers shall adore the father in spirit and in truth; for the father also seeketh such to adore him. God is a spirit, and they that adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 23 Nay, let us do as much as we can to adore, exalt, and glorify him, we never can do enough, nor come in any

degree near what he deserves. "We shall say much, and yet shall want words; but the sum of our words is, He is all. What shall we be able to do to glorify him? for the almighty himself is above all his works. The Lord is terrible and exceeding great, and his power is admirable. Glorify him as much as ever you can, *for he will yet far exceed*, and his magnificence is wonderful. Blessing the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; *for he is above all praise*. When you exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary; *for you never can go far enough*. Who shall see him and shall declare him? and who shall magnify him, as he is from the beginning?" Ecclus. xliii. 29.

Q. 10. Are the external acts of adoration, above mentioned, agreeable and pleasing to God?

A. All external acts of adoration are agreeable to God, only in as far as they proceed from the internal dispositions of the soul, are signs of these dispositions, and accompanied with them. For if we give to Almighty God these external acts of adoration, and do not at the same time give him the internal worship of the heart, we are only hypocrites and liars, like those unhappy soldiers who *bowed the knee before Jesus Christ, and said, Hail King of the Jews*; and such lying adoration offends God instead of pleasing him; for of such he says, "This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain they honour me." Mat. xv. 7. These outward acts are natural sins of the inward adoration of the heart; if the heart be actually in these internal dispositions which they represent, they are *true signs*, and therefore agreeable to God; but if the heart be not in these dispositions, they are *lying signs*; and therefore displeasing to God, who knows the heart, abhors lies, and wants we should *adore him in spirit and in truth*.

Q. 10. Are we obliged to give God external worship and adoration?

A. Most certainly, for several reasons (1.) The scripture expressly commands it. "Hear me, ye divine offspring, and bud forth as the rose planted by the

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the brooks of waters. Give ye a sweet odour as frankincense, send forth flowers as the lily, and yield a smell and bring forth leaves, *in grace, and praise, and canticles*, and bless the Lord in his works: magnify his name, and give glory to him with *the voice of your lips, and with the canticles of your mouths, and with harps.*" Eccl. xxxix. 17. "Come let us adore, and *fall down before God*, let us weep before the Lord that made us." Psa. xciv. 6. And through the whole scripture, we find the holy servants of God giving him this external adoration; thus, when Esdras read the law to the people, he "blessed the Lord, the great God: and all the people answered, amen, amen, *lifting up their hands*; and they *bowed down and adored God, with their faces to the ground.*" 2 Esdr. viii. 6. When Job heard all the disasters that had come upon him, he "rose up and rent his garments, and having shaven his head, *fell down upon the ground and worshipped.*" Job i. 20. So also the wise men from the east, "seeing the star (*that had conducted them to Jesus*) going into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and *falling down they adored him.*" Mat. ii. 10. Yea, in heaven itself, "The four and twenty ancients *fall down before him* that sitteth on the throne, and adore him that liveth for ever and ever, *casting their crowns before the throne.*" Apoc. iv. 10. (2.) As we are composed of a body and soul, and have received both from God, and were created what we are, on purpose to honour, serve, and adore him; he has of course a full right and title to the homage both of body and soul, as both are equally his sole property. (3.) External adoration is a natural effect which flows from internal worship; for such is the connection betwixt our soul and body, that when the mind is deeply affected with any thing, it naturally makes an impression on the body, and shows itself also there; thus grief and sorrow appear in sobs and tears, joy in a cheerful countenance and laughter: hence also, if the soul be deeply penetrated with the sense of its

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own nothingness, and of the greatness of the majesty of God, this must naturally shew itself in outward acts of humiliation in the body, in kneelings, prostrations and the like; this was what it did in the humble publican in the gospel, in the wise men when they came to our Saviour, and in all those others whose examples we have just seen. So that God, in demanding this outward homage from us, demands nothing but what is the natural result of the inward adoration of the soul, when it is real. And experience also shows that these outward acts of adoration, made by the body, serve also in a considerable degree to strengthen and increase the inward humiliation of the soul, and render our internal homage more fervent. (4.) It contributes also to the honour of God, that we make public profession of worshipping him, thereby testifying before others our submission to, and dependence upon him. (5.) It is questionless our duty to promote the worship of God among men, and by our example to encourage others to honour him. (6.) All nations at all times have looked upon it as a duty to give external worship to those whom they considered as gods, which shows, that to do so to the supreme being is dictated by the very light of nature itself.

Q. 12. Do all those external acts of worship, mentioned above, so entirely belong to God, that they can be used to none but him?

A. There are many other beings above us, and in many different respects more excellent than we; both in this world, such as magistrates, princes, prelates and other rulers, as also the holy servants of God; and in heaven, as the blessed saints and angels. Now right reason shows us, and the word of God commands it, that as all those who possess any particular excellency ought to be honoured on that account, so it is the duty of others to give them that honour which is their due. "Render to all men their due . . . honour to whom honour" is due. Rom. xiii. 7. And we see that those who possess any excellency or authority

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above others, expect as their due to be honoured by those below them on that account; masters require this from their servants, parents from their children, princes from their subjects, and so of all others. Now we cannot otherwise give them this honour, than by some outward signs, because men cannot otherwise judge of the heart. And as we have not different signs to signify the honour and worship due to God, and that which we give to men; for all the external acts of worship above mentioned, except sacrifice, have nothing in them to determine any particular kind of worship more than another, but only signify that we do honour the person to whom we give them; therefore all these external signs above mentioned, except sacrifice, are not so proper to God, but that they may be given also to creatures. Nay we are under a necessity of using them to creatures when we want to honour them, because we have no other way of doing it. Hence we find in the scripture itself, that not only the outward acts, but also the very words of adoration and worship, are frequently given to creatures as well as to God. Thus Abraham *adored the three angels, down to the ground.* Gen. xviii. 2. *Josuah fell on his face to the ground, and worshipped the angel.* Jos. v. 15. When Abdias met Elias the great prophet of God, *he fell on his face and said, art thou my Lord Elias?* 3 Kings xviii. 7. *David falling on his face to the ground adored thrice before Jonathan.* 1 Sam. xx. 41. *Abigail fell before David on her face, and adored upon the ground.* 1 Sam. xxv. 23. All David's nobles *bowed themselves, and worshipped God, and then the king.* 1 Chron. xxix. 20. And even in common life among ourselves, poor people stretch out their hands to others, asking alms, as a sign of their humiliation and need; we uncover our heads and bow down our bodies to one another, to testify our mutual respect; we kneel to kiss a king's hand, or to get our parents blessing, and the like. All which shows that these outward signs do not signify
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of themselves divine worship more than any other; but only show in general that we do honour and reverence the person to whom we give them, in proportion to the excellencies we know, or believe to be in them. And as these external acts are nothing in themselves; but the worship expressed by them wholly depends upon the internal dispositions of the one who uses them, which are always different, according to the different excellencies of the person to whom they are given; therefore when given to God, they are acts of divine worship; when given to princes or magistrates, they are acts of civil worship, because they are given to them on account of their civil dignity and authority; and when they are given to holy persons on earth, or to the saints and angels in heaven, they are acts of religious worship, because it is from a motive of religion, to wit, the honouring God for the gifts and graces bestowed on all these, that such external worship is given them. But with sacrifice the case is different; for as this external act of adoration, both in its own nature and in the common judgment of all mankind, represents the supreme dominion of God, and our total subjection to him, and dependence on him; it therefore can be offered to none but to God only; and therefore God expressly says, "He that sacrificeth to gods shall be put to death, save only to the Lord." *Exod. xxii. 20.* See upon this, *Sincere Christian*, Chap. XXIII.

§ 3. *Of the Sins against the Virtue of Religion, and first of Idolatry.*

Q. 13. What are the sins against the virtue of religion?

A. They are chiefly these three, idolatry, superstition, and sacrilege.

Q. 14. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is, the giving to any creature that supreme worship and adoration, which is due to God alone.

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alone, whether this be done internally in the heart, or externally by outward actions. It may be divided into three kinds. 1. Complete idolatry, which is strictly such. 2. Imperfect idolatry, or superstition; and 3. Interpretative idolatry. Complete or perfect idolatry is that of the heathens, who internally believed various creatures to be gods, confided in them, and prayed to them as gods, and offered up all outward acts of adoration to them as to gods, even sacrifice itself. And whatever they honoured thus as gods which was not God, is called an idol in the language of the scripture, "for all the gods of the nations are idols." 1 Chron. xvi. 26. Of these the scripture says, "They imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon to be the gods that rule the world . . . but unhappy are they, and their hope is among the dead, who have called gods, the works of the hands of men, gold and silver, the inventions of art, and the resemblances of beasts, or an unprofitable stone, the work of an antient hand." Wisd. xiii. 2. 10. "But the idol, that is made by hands, is cursed, as well as he that made it; he, because he made it; and it, because being frail, it is called a god. But to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike; for that which is made, together with him that made it, shall suffer torments. Therefore there shall be no respect had even to the idols of the gentiles; because the creatures of God are turned to an abomination, and a temptation to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise." Wisd. xiv. 8. St Paul tells us wherein consists the malice of this sin, "Because, *says he*, they changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things." Rom. i. 23. that is, they did not give the glory which is only due to the incorruptible God, to him to whom it belonged, but gave it to creatures. Thus the children of Israel made a golden calf, "and they said, These are thy gods,

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O Israel, that have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, . . . and rising in the morning, they offered holocausts, and peace victims." *Exod* xxxii. 4. Of which God thus complains to Moyses, " They have made to them a molten calf, and have *adored it*, and *sacrificing victims to it*, have said, These are thy gods," &c. v. 8. And David speaking of this sin says, " They made also a calf in Horeb: and they adored the graven thing. And they changed their glory into the likeness of a calf, that eateth grass; they forgot the God that saved them." *Pf.* cv. 19. Now this is one of the greatest and most abominable of sins, and we often find in the old testament, how detestable it is to God, and what severe judgments it has drawn down from heaven upon those who were guilty of it. And as the people of Israel, from their long stay among the idolatrous Egyptians, and the example of the neighbouring nations, were most prone to fall into this crime; therefore Almighty God, in the first command, thought it not enough to forbid them in general to have any other god before him; but he also in express terms prohibits this crime of idolatry, saying, " Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them; I am the Lord thy God." *Exod.* xx. 4.

Q. 15. Whence did idolatry take its rise?

A. The principal cause of idolatry is, " The old serpent who is called the devil and satan, who seduceth the whole world." *Apoc.* xii. 9. For this haughty spirit wanting in heaven to put himself upon an equality with God, saying, " I will ascend above the clouds, I will be like to the most high," *Is.* xiv. 14. was for such a detestable attempt, banished for ever out of heaven, and condemned to eternal misery; but untaught by his fall, and still madly ambitious of divine honour, he endeavoured to procure from man on earth what he could not get in heaven; and set him-

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himself to seduce the whole world from their allegiance to the God that made them, and make them give to him that worship and adoration which belongs only to Almighty God. So that all the creatures and idols which the heathens worshipped, were only the visible instruments which satan made use of to deceive them, and he considered the worship which was paid to these idols as given to himself. Thus, "They sacrificed to devils, and not to God." Deut. xxxii. 17. "For all the gods of the gentiles are devils." Pl. xcv. 5. And this seduction went to such a length, that "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils: and they shed innocent blood; the blood of their sons, and their daughters, which they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan." Pl. cv. 37. St Paul also declares the same thing. "What then? says he, do I say that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? or that the idol is any thing? But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God." 1 Cor. x. 19. On this account it is, that in scripture the devil is stiled *the prince of this world*, by Jesus Christ himself, Jo. xii. 31. And by St. Paul, *the prince of the power of this air, the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief*. Ephes. ii. 2. and finally, "*The God of this world, who blindeth the minds of unbelievers*." 2 Cor. iv. 4. A most affecting account of the various means by which the devil succeeded so far in this seduction of mankind, is given in the thirteenth and two following chapters of the book of wisdom, where we are also told that, "*The worship of abominable idols is the cause and the beginning and end of all evil*." Wisd. xiv. 27.

Q 16. Can real idolatry be committed by the external acts, though the person does not believe the idol to be God?

A. When any external act of adoration is given to any creature as if it were God, and with the view of persuading these present that it is done as an acknowledgement of its being God, this is real external idolatry,

idolatry, though the person who does it is sensible in his own mind that the creature to whom he gives this honour is not God. This was the idolatry of those unhappy christians; who in times of persecution by the heathens, bowed themselves down, or burned incense, or did any other such act of worship, before the heathen idols, in order to avoid the torments: but which the holy martyrs had in the utmost abhorrence, as a most detestable idolatry; and rather suffered whatever the utmost rage of the persecutors could inflict upon them, than be guilty of it.

Q. 17. What punishment does the scripture pronounce upon idolatry?

A. A curse, and confusion. "Curst be the man that maketh a graven or a molten thing, the abomination of the Lord, the work of the hands of artificers, and shall put it in a secret place." Deut. xxvii. 15. "Let them all be confounded that adore graven things, and that glory in their idols." Psa. xcvi. 7. "Let them be greatly confounded, that trust in a graven thing; that say to a molten thing, You are our Gods." Isa. xlii. 17. See also Isa. xlv. 9. to the end of that chapter, for the vanity of idolatry.

Q. 18. What do you understand by imperfect idolatry?

A. Almighty God, in his unsearchable judgments, permitted Satan for a time to seduce mankind in the manner we have seen, by plunging them into the horrid sin of idolatry; but at last he was pleased to put a stop to his reign, by means of his beloved Son Jesus Christ, whom he sent to destroy the works of the devil, and bring man to the knowledge and worship of the true God; for St. John assures us, that "For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 Jo. iii. 8. Accordingly the first effect of the publication of the gospel of Christ, was to destroy this kingdom of Satan, and to deliver mankind from his captivity and from going *after dumb idols, according as they were led.* 1 Cor. xii. 2. And to bring them to the know

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knowledge and service of the living God. Satan seeing it was impossible for him to stand his ground longer, or support his dominion over the hearts of men, in the way he had hitherto done, resolves to secure it in another manner ; by engaging men to honour him, and have recourse to him for his assistance, notwithstanding the knowledge they had now got of the true God, and of Jesus Christ his son. We are told in scripture, that *the working of Satan*, by which he seduces men, is *in all power, and signs, and lying wonders*, 2 Theff. ii. 9. that is, by enchantments, and forceries, and auguries, and divinations, and the like deceits ; performed by means of impious men whom he engages in his service. By these he formerly deluded the great bulk of mankind, and made them believe in him, as God. And now though by the light of the gospel men know that he is not God, but the enemy both of God and man ; and therefore he can no longer prevail with them to look upon him as God, and formally worship him as such, yet he still endeavours by the same diabolical means, to persuade them to give him some portion at least of that homage which they owe to God alone ; to withdraw their confidence from God, and place it in him, to have recourse to him in various needs, to have a fear and dread of his power ; and by these means to engage them in a number of superstitious practices of his invention, and for his honour and service. Now this is what is meant by imperfect idolatry, to wit, the turning our backs upon the living God, whom we know to be God, and giving part of that homage which belongs only to God, to the devil, having recourse to him for help, instead of seeking it from God, confiding in his assistance, and fearing his displeasure, and involving ourselves in all the detestable ways of superstition, which we shall more fully consider below.

Q. 19. What is understood by interpretative idolatry ?

A. Satan never having been able to prevail with any

any great number of christians, directly to worship him by these superstitious practices, still strives to keep up his kingdom among the great bulk of christians in another manner; to wit, by engaging them to place the affections of their hearts upon the riches, and pleasures, and honours of this world, more than upon God, trusting in them, and seeking their chief happiness from the enjoyment of them; by this means he engages them in his own service, while they transgress the law of the almighty, and do those things which are pleasing to the devil, in order to procure or preserve these objects of their affections. Now though this be not an express, formal worship of idols, like complete idolatry, nor yet a going directly to Satan for help, as in the imperfect idolatry; yet it is justly interpreted to be a species of idolatry, because it is loving the creature more than the creator, contrary to the great and essential duty of loving God above all things; and therefore the scripture expressly declares this also to be idolatry, and an idolatry which for ever excludes from heaven. "Know ye this, *says St. Paul*, and understand, that no fornicator, nor unclean, nor covetous person, *which is the service of idols*, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God." Eph. v. 5. "Mortify therefore your members, which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, *which is the service of idols*. For which things sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of unbelief." Colos. iii. 5.

§ 4. *Of Superstition.*

Q. 20. What is superstition?

A. Superstition taken in its general sense, is, in itself, the same as imperfect idolatry, which we have explained above, Q. 17. It consists in turning away from the true God, and seeking help from the devil; it is a withdrawing one's self from the providence of
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God, and from the ordinary means appointed by him for gaining any good thing we want, and following the delusions of the devil, using superstitious means appointed by him for obtaining what we wish to have. They are called superstitious means, because they are such as either in themselves, or in some circumstance attending them, and on which the chief hope of success is placed, have no natural connection with the end proposed, and have not been appointed by God as supernatural means for obtaining it. Almighty God has ordained two different ways of assisting us in our necessities ; the one is by *natural means* : thus medicines have received from God various natural virtues for recovering our health ; food is appointed by him as the natural means to sustain our life ; prudent examination and consideration, to find out the truth in things proper for us to know ; his holy law, and the light of reason, to direct us in our conduct ; and so of others. The other is by *supernatural means* ; thus prayers, particularly those of the church, applied to us either immediately, or by means of those creatures which she blesses for that purpose, are appointed by God as supernatural means of obtaining many good things for us, both for soul and body : fasting and alms are also ordained as means to obtain mercy and light from heaven : the relicks of God's holy saints, now reigning with him in glory, have often been used by his infinite goodness for like purposes ; as also, all other pious practices approved by his holy church ; all which we may lawfully and laudably use to obtain from his bounty a blessing on our lawful affairs, and other good things we need. But on the contrary, when we use means to gain our ends, which have no natural virtue for procuring them, and are not appointed by God, nor authorized by his church, as supernatural means for that purpose ; all such are superstitious and highly unlawful, and are always the more so, in proportion to the greater degree of confidence one puts in them.

Q. 21. What are the ends people commonly have in view by superstitious practices?

A. Generally speaking they are unlawful ends, (though not always) and this is one great cause, why they have recourse to unlawful means: for when once the heart of man is so far perverted as to seek for things unlawful, conscious to himself that he cannot expect them by the blessing of God, he is easily impelled by his passions to seek them from the devil. The most ordinary ends men have in view in these things are these following. (1.) To know things which are hidden from us, either from a vain and dangerous curiosity, or from views of interest, such as, to find out lost goods, or hidden treasures, or the persons who have stolen from us, or the like. (2.) To know things to come, whether regarding ourselves or others, such as, what concerns our good or bad fortune, or the good or bad success of our affairs, that so we may regulate our conduct accordingly. (3.) To procure some good to ourselves or others, particularly health, success to our affairs, or the like. (4.) To procure some evil to those whom we esteem our enemies, or to raise impure love in another person, either towards ourselves or other. (5.) To work wonderful things in order to gain applause and esteem, or for other worldly views.

Q. 22. Are all equally guilty, who use superstitious practices?

A. No; there are different degrees of guilt in those who use them; for (1.) Some have an express compact with the devil, in which he requires certain conditions on their side, which are always highly dishonourable to God, and destructive of their salvation; and he on his part engages, that, whenever such and such things shall be done, or words spoken, or observations made, as he and they agree upon, he will then do what they desire of him, and produce the effect required. (2.) Others have not this express compact with the devil himself, but only learn the things agreed upon between him and those who had the

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the compact with him, from those who know them ; but at the same time they know them to be of the devil's appointment, and that the effect produced by them is done by him. Both these kinds go in scripture by these different names, witches, wizzards, forcerers, magicians, soothsayers, fortune-tellers, diviners, charmers and inchanters. (3.) Others again learn the various means appointed to be used for producing the effect desired, as secrets of nature, as hidden mysteries, without knowing any thing expressly about any prior compact with the devil, though with strong suspicions of their coming from that origin, which may be the case with many, to whom the use of the means is handed down through different generations, at a considerable time from the original contract, though the memory of the contract itself be lost. And (4.) others in fine having heard these things as useful secrets, may use them in their simplicity and ignorance, without any suspicion of the guilt they contain. Now it is manifest that the degree of guilt is very different in each of these classes.

Q. 23. Are there any people at present in the world, who are guilty of this crime ?

A. (I.) As for those of the two first classes, just mentioned we may observe. (1.) That there have been many such in the world, cannot be called in question : the word of God expressly affirms it, gives several examples of such, and makes severe laws against them. (2.) That there may be such in the world at present, is without doubt ; because what has been, may still be ; we read in the New Testament of a young woman, “ possessed with a pythonical spirit, who brought her masters much gain by divining.” Acts xvi. We read there also of Simon the magician, who “ bewitched the people of Samaria, by his magical practices.” Acts viii. 11. St. Paul even supposes that such may be among christians, and reckons *witchcraft* among the works of the flesh, which he orders all christians to avoid, declaring that those “ who do such things, shall not obtain

obtain the kingdom of God." Gal. v. 20. And God himself declared to St. John, that *forcerers* "shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone." Apoc. xxi. 8. (3.) That they are as frequent among christians as ignorant people commonly imagine, is surely false; for it is certain that the devil's power is much abridged, wherever the gospel is received; and Almighty God, speaking of the times of the gospel, says by his prophet, "I will take away *forceries* out of the land, and there shall be no *divinations* in thee." Mich. v. 11. Which shows, at least, that they will be less frequent; the devil will not have so much power to delude men by these things.

(II.) But as for those of the two last classes, mentioned in the preceeding question, it is surprising how many such are to be found in all nations.

Q. 24. What are the several kinds of superstitious practices which are used by these last?

A. They are of different kinds, according to the different ends proposed; to mention every particular would be endless; we shall here take notice of some of the most common.

(1.) In order to know hidden things, or things to come, what numbers of idle superstitious things are done? Such as to cast the white of an egg, or melted lead into water, and observe what figure it makes; to use the sieve and shears for discovering a thief; winnowing corn in the barn, on the eve of Hallowday, to know one's future husband or wife, making dumb cakes to make one dream of the same, looking through the shoulder-bone of animals, reading cups, and the like. In all which one sees there is not the smallest natural connection between the thing done, and the end proposed; and surely God Almighty never appointed these things as means to know what is wanted by them; therefore, either nothing can possibly be ever known by them; or if it be, it is only by means of the devil; and whoever uses them with the hopes of knowing any thing of them, goes to the devil for such

such knowledge. It is alledged by many, that they do these things only for diversion; but what begins in diversion may end in earnest, and instances are not wanting of those who had brought themselves to a persuasion that they could undoubtedly tell what would happen by these means, and had often had examples of the truth of their predictions from using them; for in all these things the devil easily enters, God so permitting, in punishment of the crime of those who use them; according to what God says upon another but similar occasion, "Although the thing should come to pass, thou shalt not hear him, for the Lord your God trieth you." Deut. xiii. 1.

(2.) Akin to this is the pretending to know one's future good or bad luck by omens and vain observances, to judge of the success or miscarriage of affairs by them, and regulate ones actions accordingly. If one, going out in the morning about some affair, should stumble on the threshold and fall, this is considered as a bad omen, and the affair is put off for that day; if a magpie should chatter at the window; a crow croak on the house top, if salt be spilt on the table; all this, say they, forebodes some misfortune; if the first thing one meets when he goes out be certain animals, if others should cross the road, &c. that will be an unlucky day. Now, what power have these things to forebode good or bad luck? surely they have none of themselves, nor from nature, much less by appointment of God; consequently, either they have no such power at all, which they certainly never have when people never mind them, but laugh at them; or if they have any such power to superstitious people, who let themselves be influenced by such idle fears, it is only by means of the devil, which God permits for their punishment. Strange indeed is the folly of all such! The word of God assures us, that *If God be for us, who can be against us? And that all things work together for good to them that love God;* and we know that the only thing that can deprive us of his protection, and make our affairs go wrong,

wrong, or bring misfortunes upon us, is sin ; and yet such people have no concern about avoiding sin, are not afraid of that monster, but among their first works in the morning, they will think nothing of praying to the devil to curse, or take themselves or others, and yet for a mere idle fret be terrified lest some evil come upon them !

(3.) Much of the same nature with this, is the observance of lucky and unlucky days ; a superstition which comes entirely from the antient heathens, and began to creep in among christians even in the time of the apostles. Thus St. Paul writes to the Galatians, " You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest perhaps I have laboured in vain among you." Gal. iv. 10. He was afraid lest this superstitious observation should deprive them of all the benefit of their conversion to christianity. We may judge from this, what a wicked thing it must be in the sight of God, to be tied down to such a slavish fear of doing what we ought to do on one day more than on another, from the superstitious opinion of its being an unlucky day. Do not all times, days, seasons, and moments equally belong to God ? Does he tie down himself to give us his blessing on one day more than another ? Is not his ear always open to the prayer of those that fear him ? Or has he any where declared that we must not expect any blessing from him, if we begin any work on certain days ? And yet it is surprising how much this superstition tyrannizes over some peoples minds. Holy Innocents day happens on a Monday, for example ; therefore, say they, all the Mondays that year will be unlucky, and no work must be begun, nor must we go abroad on Mondays all that year. What folly ! You should never cut your nails nor comb your hair, says another, upon a Friday, lest some evil befall you on that account ! But see the folly of man ! People will make no difficulty to marry in forbidden times, and against the laws of the church, which offends God and tends to make their marriage unhappy ; but they

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will not marry in the break of the moon, because the devil puts it into their head that the marriage will be unhappy if they do so ! They will not scruple to work on holidays, which they know to be a sin and displeases God ; but if the devil puts it into their heads that any day is unlucky, they will do no work on that day, for fear of incurring his displeasure ! Must not this be most provoking to the Almighty ?

(4.) The observation of dreams is another source of superstitious practices ; when a person persuades himself that from his dreams he certainly knows what is to happen, or how affairs are to succeed, and upon such persuasion regulates his conduct. On this subject, however, we must observe, (1.) That dreams may come from God ; he was sometimes pleased to communicate his will to his servants by their means, especially under the old law, when he had not so fully revealed his divine truths to mankind, as he has done in the gospel. Witness the dreams of Jacob, Laban, Joseph, Pharaoh, Nebuchodonosor, Daniel, the three wise men, St. Joseph, &c. And Almighty God says, “ If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream.” Numb. xii. 6. Of Saul likewise we are told, that “ he consulted the Lord, and he answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by priests, nor by prophets.” 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. But (2.) It is to be observed, that in all these examples, we find that when God did communicate his mind to men by dreams, they always were, either great saints or prophets, or people in a public character, and for some affair of great importance, or for the public good. But we do not read that he acted in this manner with ordinary people, and for directing them in the common concerns of life. Nay, (3.) On the contrary, lest others should be deluded by the devil to give credit to dreams, from his own manifesting his will sometimes to his servants by their means, he makes an express and general law, for all to pay no regard to them. “ You shall not divine,

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nor observe dreams." Lev. xix. 26. "Let there be none among you that observeth dreams . . . for the Lord abhorreth all these things." Deut. xviii. 10. Nor was there any fear that his orders given to his servants by dreams, would be in danger of being neglected from this prohibition; because when he speaks to his servants by dreams, he accompanies them with such circumstances as show them undoubtedly to be from him. The thing proposed is always good, the manner of proposing it decent, clear, and distinct, and it leaves the mind in great peace and humility, and more fervent in prayer. (4.) Every body will readily grant that the idle fancies which come into our head in sleep, from the constitutions of our bodies, and the various dispositions of our humours, from the fumes of what we have been eating and drinking, or from the ideas which had engaged our imaginations through the day, can never be any sign of what is to happen to us, nor any kind of rule for us to act by. In order to be any such sign, our dreams must be occasioned by some supernatural cause, either God or the devil, a good or a bad spirit. Seeing therefore that God seldom or never now a-days speaks to men in this manner, and that when he was wont to do so, it was only to great people or saints, and for great causes, and that he expressly prohibits all in general to observe dreams, it follows manifestly, that it is a high presumption to imagine that God Almighty or his good angels speak to us by the foolish, confused, mysterious fancies which come into our head in sleep. And consequently, that such dreams as seem to present or forebode things to come, however deep an impression they may leave upon the imagination, either forebode nothing at all, or if they do, it is only by means of satan, who wants by their means to delude us. And hence the scripture declares, that "Dreams lift up fools. The man that giveth head to lying visions, is like to him that catcheth at a shadow and followeth after the wind . . . what truth can come from that which is false?"

false? dreams received in them finds a fails all and to p semblan happen, things, ment of happen a to them God on come to for the L the Lord xiii. i.

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false? deceitful divinations and lying omens, and the dreams of evil doers are vanity . . . for dreams have deceived many, and they have failed that put their trust in them." *Ecclus. xxxiv. 1.* For when the devil finds a soul given to such idle curiosities, he never fails all he can to increase their vain observance of them, and to procure them such dreams as have some resemblance to things which he foresees are soon to happen, which increases their confidence in such things, and God sometimes permits this in punishment of their sin; and therefore though things should happen as foretold by dreams, one should give no heed to them but despise them; according to the orders of God on another occasion. "Although that should come to pass which they foretell, do not believe them; for the Lord your God trieth you, whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart or not." *Deut. xiii. 1.*

(5.) To procure health for man or beast, to prevent evil from coming upon them, or to obtain some other good, what numbers of idle charms and superstitions are often used by the common people? such as sewing certain things in the clothes; pronouncing certain words; tying things about some parts of the body; carrying papers about one with certain unknown names and figures written on them; the stones of the ford for the fevers; the touch of a sheer smith for other distempers, and the like. And, what particularly shows the haughty pride of satan, and his devices for deluding man, they sometimes make use even of sacred things belonging to the service of God in their superstitions; for by this means the devil has the pleasure of seeing holy things profaned, and of being himself honoured by these things which are appointed for the honour of God; whilst poor mortal man, seeing holy things employed for bringing about some good end, has less suspicion of the infernal fraud, and therefore is the more easily deluded. Some of these delusions are as follows; prayers, which are good in themselves, said in a certain posture, and for a certain

determinate number of times, as an infallible means to prevent sickness or preserve health : certain verses of scripture written in a certain figure with other unknown characters, and sewed in one's clothes as a certain means to prevent sudden death. The holy mysteries celebrated by a priest of a certain age, with a fixed number of candles on the altar, as a certain means to obtain some bodily favour from God, &c. In all which and such like cases, we see that superstition enters into the vain circumstances added to what is otherwise good, and because the whole stress is laid upon these vanities, the infallible effect they pretend to is attributed to them, with the certain confidence of success. Strange folly indeed, to be deluded by these things ! how inconsistent our conduct ! The son of God himself passes his sacred word that all the necessities of life shall be added to us, if we seek first his kingdom, by avoiding sin and doing good : but him we will not believe, nor trust his word ; but go on doing evil and avoiding good. The devil promises us some worldly advantage if we do some idle ridiculous thing offensive to God, but agreeable on that account to him, and we give him entire credit, and with fear and trembling exactly perform what he requires ! mistaken mortals !

(6) But the worst kind of all is when superstitious means are used to procure some ill to others ; to bewitch them, to make them fall into diseases, or into poverty ; to torment them with pains ; to hurt their cattle ; to kill them ; to excite them to carnal love with any one ; to make them rise into hatred against others, &c. All which abominations, besides the detestable superstition they contain, are also grievous sins against charity, and for the most part against justice, which greatly enhances their malice in the sight of God.

Q. 25. What idea does the scripture give of all such superstitious practices ?

A. The light in which the scripture proposes them is contained under these following heads. (1.) *It prohibits them as abominations* " Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." *Exod. xxii. 18.* " A man or woman

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that hath a familiar spirit, or is a wizard, dying let them die, they shall stone them, and their blood shall be upon them." Lev. xx. 27. "Beware lest thou have a mind to imitate the abominations of those nations; neither let there be found among you any one that consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams, and omens; neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor any one that consulteth pythonick spirits, or fortune tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead. For *the Lord abhorreth all these things*, and for *these abominations he will destroy them* at thy coming." Deut. xviii. 9. See above Q. 22. No. 2. (2.) *It strictly forbids all communication with those who use such practices.* "Go not aside after wizards, neither ask any thing of soothsayers, to be defiled by them, I am the Lord your God." Lev. xix 31. "The soul that shall go aside after magicians and soothsayers, and shall commit fornication with them, I will set my face against that soul and destroy it out of the midst of its people." Lev. xx. 6. (3.) *It shows us several examples of the punishment God sends upon all such.* Thus when Ochozias king of Israel fell sick, he sent to consult a heathen idol about his health; but Elias the prophet came to him in the name of God, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast sent messengers to consult Beelzebub the god of Accaron, as though there were not a God in Israel, of whom thou mightest enquire the word, therefore from the bed on which thou art gone up, thou shalt not come down, but thou shalt surely die. So he died accordingly." 4 Kings i. 16. And indeed this is commonly the case with those who use superstitious means for recovering their health; they either reap no benefit at all from them, but die of that very distemper, or if they turn any better of it, some greater evil befalls them. Of the people of Israel we are told, that in the reign of Osee, "they gave themselves to divinations, and soothsayings; and they delivered themselves to do evil before the Lord to provoke him. And the Lord

was very angry with Israel, and he removed them out of his sight." 4 Kings xvii. 17. That is, these sins filled up their cup of iniquity, and were the cause of the dispersion and utter destruction of the ten tribes. Of Manasses also, the king of Juda, we are told that, "He used divination, and observed omens, and appointed pythons, and multiplied soothsayers, to do evil in the sight of the Lord and to provoke him . . . therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I will bring on evils on Jerusalem and Juda, that whosoever shall hear of them both his ears shall tingle." 4 Kings xxi. 6. 12. "And I will deliver them unto the hands of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies." v. 14. (4.) *It shows us the folly of trusting to these things.* "Stand now, says Almighty God, with thy inchanters, and with the multitude of thy forceries, in which thou hast laboured from thy youth, if so be it may profit thee any thing, or if thou mayest become stronger. Thou hast failed in the multitude of thy counsels: let now the astrologers stand and save thee, they that gazed at the stars and counted the months, that from them they might tell the things that should come to thee; Behold they are as stubble, fire hath burnt them, they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flames; there are no coals wherewith they may be warmed, nor fire that they may sit thereat. Such are all the things become to thee in which thou hast laboured." Is. xlvii. 12. (5.) *It commands us to have no communication with them, nor to fear them, but to have recourse to God.* Besides the prohibitions above related, St Paul says, "I would not that you should be made partakers with devils. You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils: you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils." 1 Cor. x. 20. Wherefore, "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not according to the ways of the gentiles, and be not afraid of the signs of heaven which the heathens fear . . . they shall be proved together

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gether to be senseless and foolish: a stock is the doctrine of their vanity . . . they are vain things and a ridiculous work, by the time of their visitation they shall perish." Jer. x. 2. 8. 15. But "there is none like to thee, O Lord, thou art great, and great is thy name in might; Who shall not fear thee, O king of nations?" *ibid.* v. 6. And therefore "When they shall say to you, Seek unto them that have pythonical spirits and diviners, that mutter in their enchantments; should not the people seek unto their God, and not for the living to the dead?" *Ib.* viii. 19.

Q. 26. Whether or not has the devil power to hurt people by means of those who use enchantments and sorceries for such a purpose?

A. In answer to this several things must be observed. (1.) That the devils have great power and strength to do many things in the material creation, if they be allowed to use it, is undoubted. They turned the rods into serpents by the enchantments of the Egyptian magicians; and the waters into blood, *Exod.* vii. and brought up frogs, *Exod.* viii. They destroyed Job's cattle and servants by thunder and lightning, and caused the house to fall on his children, by a strong wind, and St Paul calls them *the princes of the power of the air.* *Ephes.* ii. 2. They smote Job with sore boils, *Job* ii. Which shows what power they have to hurt the human body; also our saviour declared, that it was the devil who had kept the crooked woman bound for eighteen years. *Luke* xiii. And an angel of satan was given St Paul to buffet him. *2. Cor.* xii. 7. And of those whom they possessed, some they made dumb, some deaf, and some they threw into fits: An evil spirit from the Lord afflicted Saul in his mind: satan hindered St Paul from going to the Thessalonians once and again, when he intended going to them, *1 Thess.* ii. 18. And a devil killed Sarah's seven husbands, *Tob.* iii. Satan also killed Job's children and his cattle, and a legion of his angels destroyed the herd of swine in the sea.

(2.) The devil's will to do ill to man is no less than his power, for "by the envy of the devil death entered into the world." Wisd. ii. 24. Our Saviour declares, "he was a murderer from the beginning." Jo. viii. 44. And St. Peter assures us, that he is continually going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. v. 8. (3.) But notwithstanding all this, he can never do the smallest harm to any creature, but in as far as he is commissioned or permitted by God. Thus the magicians of Egypt could not bring up lice, but were obliged to confess that the finger of God was there: neither could Satan go one iota farther in hurting Job, than his permission bore, nor could the legion go into the swine, without leave from our blessed Saviour, nor could they hurt Tobias, Sarah's eighth husband. But (4.) God sometimes permits them to use their power for the hurt of men, or other creatures, as all the above examples show, and even commissions them to execute his just judgments against sinful men, according to that of David, "He sent upon them the wrath of his indignation; indignation and wrath, and trouble, which he sent upon them by evil angels." Psa. lxxvii. 49. Nay, they are the "spirits that are created for vengeance, and in their fury they lay on grievous torments; and in the time of destruction, they shall pour out all their force, and they shall appease the wrath of him that made them." Eccl. xxxix. 33. (5.) The chief causes which move God to give them such permission against men, are our sins; by which we become enemies of God, and objects of his wrath, and by which the devil acquires a right over us as his slaves; by them we deserve punishment, and it is the devil's business to punish. But of all other sins, these following most commonly put man in the power of Satan *Lust*; for thus the angel Raphael said to Tobias; "Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail: For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves and from

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from their mind, and to give themselves to their lusts, as the horse and the mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power." Tob. vii 16. Now if over those who enter into the married state with this view, the devil hath power, how much more must he have it over those who abandon themselves to unlawful lusts? *Pride*, of which we are told that the devil "is king over all the children of pride." Job xli. 5. And when St. Paul had been taken up to the third heavens, and heard things unutterable, an angel of Satan was given to buffet him, lest he should fall into pride from these high revelations. Lastly, those who are given to *discord and dissention*, which is properly the sin of the devil, for "an evil man always seeketh quarrels; but a cruel angel shall be sent against him." Prov. xvii. 11.

Q. 27. What consequences flow from these truths?

A. (1.) That the surest way to hinder the devil from being able to hurt us, either by himself or by any enchantment used against us by his agents, is to avoid sin, and live in the friendship of God, for "If God be with us, who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31. But if at any time God should permit the devil to do any external evil to any of his servants, as was the case with Job; it is only as a medicine for their greater trial, and which he will turn out to their greater good. (2.) Never to be afraid of all the machinations of the devil or of his agents, but to place an entire confidence in God; for the scripture says, "He that dwelleth in the aid of the most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob... thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night; of the arrow that flieth in the day; of the business that walketh about in the dark; of the invasion, or of the noon-day devil." Psa. xc. 1. 5. Hence, (3.) all the enchantments and charms, and superstitious practices, that can be used against us, can never touch us, nor harm us, if we continue faithful to our God, and have a firm confidence in him, and therefore, (4.) We ought

ought only to be afraid of sin, but not of the devil. (5.) That if at any time a person, in punishment of his sins, or for God's wise ends, should be afflicted by any effects of sorcery, he ought never to use, nor permit others to use, counter-inchantments for his relief; this would be a heinous crime, flying to the devil for aid, and would only give the devil more power to hurt him, and entangle him more and more in his snares. But, (6.) he ought to fly only to God for remedy, by a sincere repentance of his sins, by prayer and fasting, which Christ himself assures us, is so necessary for overcoming the devils, that some kinds of them cannot be cast out but by that means. Mark ix. 28. And particularly by having recourse to the prayers of the church of Christ, to whom he has given power and authority over all diabolical machinations, saying to his apostles, "These signs shall follow them that believe, in my name they shall cast out devils." Mark xvi. 17. And this power he gives to the pastors of the church in a particular manner, in the persons of the apostles; for "He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out." Mat. x. 1. and "he gave them power to cast out devils." Mark iii. 15. and "he gave them power over unclean spirits." Mark vi. 7. and "he gave them power and authority over all devils." Luke ix. 1. Which power these first pastors of the church used accordingly, of which we find several instances in the Acts of the Apostles; and all their successors, walking in their footsteps, and confiding in that original charter granted them by Jesus Christ, have continued, as occasion served, to exert this power over unclean spirits, and all their diabolical machinations, to the unspeakable comfort of those who are distressed by them, to the glory of God, and the exaltation of the true faith of his son Jesus.

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§ 5. *Of Sacrilege.*

Q. 28. What is sacrilege?

A. Sacrilege is an abuse or profanation of holy things. Now by holy things is understood, whatever is separated from worldly uses, and dedicated or set apart to be employed in the service of God : and they are divided into three classes; to wit, *holy persons*, who are holy by the sacred character they bear, and are deputed to the service of God, and his church, such are Ecclesiasticks and Religious. *Holy things*, which are the sacraments, the sacred vessels, and sacred ornaments, and the like, employed in the worship of God ; the goods dedicated to the maintenance of his ministers, and to the needs of his churches; the holy oils and other things, specially blessed by the church for God's honour and service. *Holy places*, which are churches, chapels, cimiteries, monasteries, and other religious houses, set apart for God's service. Now by the abuse or profanation of those things is meant, when any irreverence or contempt is shown to them, either in the thing done, or manner of doing it, or by using them for profane and worldly purposes, opposite to those ends for which they are appointed as holy things ; whether these purposes be otherwise lawful actions in themselves, as when sacred vessels are used to drink out of in profane banqueting ; or unlawful and criminal, as when holy things are made use of for superstitious practices.

Q. 29. How is this profanation understood to be committed in regard to each of the three classes of holy things?

A. (1.) With regard to *holy persons* ; it is committed by beating them, which is a great irreverence to their sacred character, and by committing sins of impurity with such as are consecrated to God by vows of chastity. (2.) With regard to *holy things* ; profanation may be committed on them different ways ; as by the unworthy administering or receiving
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any of the sacraments ; keeping the Holy Eucharist without the becoming decency, or keeping it too long, so as to alter the species, taking the chrism or holy oils for any profane use ; touching the consecrated vessels without permission or necessity ; using them, and the sacred ornaments, for worldly and common uses ; showing any irreverence to the Holy Bible, or to holy images and relicks, such as throwing them on the ground in contempt, trampling them under-foot, or the like ; selling holy things as such, that is, selling them at more than their material value, on account of their being consecrated. Making use of the words of the holy scripture for superstitious uses, or for buffooneries and the like. Robbing or stealing church goods, destined for the service of God and the maintenance of his ministers, and usurping them by force, or refusing to pay them according to the destination of the donors. (3.) As to *churches and other holy places*, they are sacrilegiously profaned, when they are pillaged, burnt or destroyed ; when actions are done in them contrary to the worship of God for which they are destined ; when they are turned into profane uses, such as places of merchandizing, gaming, drinking, or other worldly purposes.

Q. 30. On what is the respect, due to holy things, grounded ?

A. On the connection they have with God, who is jealous of his honour, and of the respect due to every thing that belongs to him ; and it must be owned that, as, where there is a true spirit of religion and piety towards God, this will necessarily show itself in a just respect and veneration for all those sacred persons and things, which have such a near connection with him ; so, on the contrary, where this respect and veneration is wanting towards these sacred objects, it is a sure sin that virtue and piety are greatly upon the losing hand, and religion itself upon the decline. Hence we find that God Almighty commands the greatest reverence and regard to be paid to every thing

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thing that belongs to him, and severely punishes those who fail in doing so: and,

(1.) With regard to *sacred persons*, he says, "Take heed thou forsake not the Levite all the time that thou livest in the land." Deut. xii. 19. "And the Levite that is within thy gates, beware thou forsake him not." Deut. xiv. 27. And why so? Because "God separated the tribe of Levi, to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to stand before him in the ministry, and to bless in his name." Deut. x. 8. "To bear the iniquity of the people, and pray for them in the sight of the Lord." Levit. x. 17. And hence Michas, when the young Levite came and agreed to stay with him as his priest, said, "Now I know God will do me good, since I have a priest of the race of the Levites." Judg. xvii. 13. Again, Almighty God says by his prophet David, "Touch not my anointed, and do no evil to my prophets." Ps. civ. 15. And by the mouth of the wise man, the Holy Ghost speaks thus, "With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence his priests. With all thy strength love him that made thee, and forsake not his ministers. Honour God with all thy soul, and give honour to the priests . . . give them their portion, as is commanded thee." Eccus. vii. 31. Where we see the fear, love, and honour of God is immediately followed by the respect due to his ministers, as two things naturally and necessarily connected together. St. Paul also is very plain upon this point; for when he sent Epaphroditus his fellow labourer to the Philippians, he said, "Receive him with all joy in the Lord, and treat with honour such as he is." Philip. ii. 29. And in another epistle, he says, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; that you esteem them more abundantly in charity, for their work's sake: Have peace with them." 1 Thess. v. 12. "Let the priests that rule well, be esteemed worthy of double honour; especially those that labour

bour in the word and in doctrine." 1 Tim. v. 17. Let us now see how sacrilege against such as fail in this is punished. " Mary and Aaron spoke against Moses . . . and said, Hath the Lord spoken by Moses only? Hath he not also spoken to us in like manner? And when the Lord heard this, immediately" he called upon them all three, and said, " Hear my words, If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream : But it is not so with my servant Moses, who is most faithful in all my house ; for I speak to to him mouth to mouth, and plainly, and not by riddles and figures doth he see the Lord ; *Why then were ye not afraid to speak ill of my servant Moses?* And being angry with them, went away. The cloud also that was over the tabernacle departed ; and behold Mary appeared, white as snow with a leprosy." Num. xii. 1. From which she was not cured till after seven days by the prayers of Moses. The wife of a Levite is most inhumanly abused by some of the tribe of Benjamin, see Judges xix. for which cause a dreadful war was raised against that tribe, in which no less than twenty five thousand valiant men were killed, and their city burnt. And, " All the cities and villages of Benjamin were consumed with devouring flames." Judg. xx. Jeroboam king of Israel " stretched forth his hand from the altar *against a prophet*, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand which he stretched forth against him, withered, and he was not able to draw it back again to him." 3 Kings xiii. 4. Zacharias the son of Jojada the priest, reproving king Joas for his impiety, the king's servants " gathered themselves together against him, and stoned him at the king's command in the court of the house of the Lord . . . And when he was dying, he said, The Lord see and require it ! And when a year was come about, the army of Syria came up against Joas, and they came to Juda and Jerusalem, and they killed all the princes of the people, and they sent all the spoils to the king of Damascus : And whereas there

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there came a very small number of the Syrians, the Lord delivered into their hands an infinite multitude, because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. And on Joas they executed shameful judgments; and departing they left him in great diseales. And his servants rose up against him for revenge of the blood of the son of Jojada the priest, and they slew him in his bed, and he died." 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.

(2.) As to *sacred vessels* and other things dedicated to the service of God, it is amazing what respect and veneration he required to be shown to them; he would allow none but the high priest to enter into the holy of holies, and that only once in the year, and after a great many ceremonies and sacrifices to purify him for that purpose, as is related, Levit. xvi. Where God says to Moyses, "Speak to Aaron thy brother, that he enter not at all into the sanctuary which is within the veil before the propitiatory, with which the ark is covered, lest he die, unless he first do these things." ver. 2. and then gives orders what he was to do; and ends the chapter in these words, "And this shall be an ordinance for ever . . . once in a year." ver. 34. He allowed none but the sons of Moyses and Aaron the priests to have the custody of the sanctuary, and ordained that "what stranger soever cometh into it, shall be put to death." Num. iii. 38. He permitted none but Aaron and his sons to touch the ark and all the sacred vessels, and when they were going to set forward on a journey, he allowed none but them to cover up the ark and all the sacred vessels with their proper coverings, and then deliver them to those of the Levites, whose business it was to carry them, but expressly ordained these Levites not to touch them. "They shall not touch the vessels of the sanctuary, lest they die." Numb. iv. 15. And he says to Aaron, "Thou and thy sons shall minister in the tabernacle of the testimony; and the Levites shall watch to do thy commands, and about all the works of the tabernacle, only they

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shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary, nor the altar, lest both they die, and you also perish with them." Num. xviii. 2. Nay, he would not allow any other but the priests to look at the holy vessels. "Let not others, by any curiosity, see the things that are in the sanctuary, before they be wrapped up; otherwise they shall die." Numb. iv. 20. He also strictly ordained that the tithes and offerings which he appointed for the maintenance of his priests and the service of the altar, should be punctually paid, and declares by his prophet Malachy, that the withdrawing any part of that, was an afflicting of God himself. "Shall a man afflict God? *says he*, for you afflict me. And you have said, Wherein do we afflict thee? In tythes and first fruits. And you are accursed with want, and you afflict me, even the whole nation of you" Mal. iii. 8. But see how he punisheth transgressions against these duties. (1.) At the taking of Jericho, God commanded that "whatsoever gold or silver should be found there, or vessels of brass and iron, should be consecrated to the Lord, and laid up in his treasures;" and all the people were forbid to touch ought of these things, Jos. vi. 18. But Achan of the tribe of Judah "saw among the spoils a scarlet garment exceeding good, and two hundred sicles of silver, and a golden rule of fifty sicles, and he coveted them, and took them away." Jos. vii. 21. This sacrilegious robbery brought a curse upon the whole people, for in the next battle they were defeated, and lost a number of men; and when the crime was discovered, Achan with his stolen goods, his children, his cattle, and all his goods, were brought to a valley, and there he was stoned, and they burnt all that belonged to him, and consumed them with fire. Jos. viii. 24. (4.) The Philistines in a victory they gained over the Israelites took the ark, and carried it away in triumph, placing it in the temple of their idol Dagon; but next morning, the idol was fallen and broken to pieces before the ark, and "The hand of the Lord was heavy

heavy upon them, and he destroyed them, and afflicted them with emrods. And in their villages and fields there came forth a multitude of mice, and there was the confusion of a great mortality in the city . . . and there was the fear of death in every city, and the hand of God was exceeding heavy. The men also that did not die, were afflicted with the emrods; and the cry of every city went up to heaven." 1 Kings v. 6. 12 So that they were forced to send back the ark to its own place. (3.) The first place the ark came to on its return, was the country of the Bethsamites; these were glad indeed to see the ark, but they out of a sacrilegious curiosity had the presumption to open it and look into it, for which crime God slew them with a very great slaughter, to the number of seventy of their principal men, and fifty thousand of the common people." 1 Kings vi. 19. (4.) When David in a great procession was bringing the ark to its own place, "Oza put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, because the oxen kicked, and made it lean aside. And the indignation of the Lord was kindled against Oza, and he struck him for his rashness; and he died there before the ark of God." 2 Kings vi. 6. (5) Two hundred and fifty men, of the leading men, but who were not priests, took upon them to offer incense, in two hundred and fifty censers, "and a fire coming out from the Lord, destroyed them all." Numb. xvi. 35. (6.) Ozias the king, elated with his victories, "neglected the Lord his God, and going into the temple of the Lord, he had a mind to burn incense upon the altar of incense." The priests opposed him, as their duty required, but "Ozias was angry, and holding in his hand the censer to burn incense, threatened the priests. And presently there rose a leprosy in his fore-head . . . and they made haste to thrust him out. Yea, he himself being also frightened, hastened to go out, because he had quickly felt the stroke of the Lord. And Ozias the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and he dwelt in a house

apart, being full of the leprosy." 2 Chron. xxvi. 16. (7.) Baltassar king of Babylon made a great feast, and in his drunkenness commanded the sacred vessels which his father Nabuchodonosor had brought away out of the temple of Jerusalem, to be brought, that he and his wives and nobles might drink out of them; but immediately the figure of a hand appeared, writing his condemnation upon the wall; upon which the prophet Daniel being called to interpret the writing, spoke thus to the king, "Thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and the vessels of his house have been brought before thee, and thou, and thy nobles, and thy wives, and thy concubines have drunk wine in them, and thou hast praised the gods of silver and of gold . . . which neither see, nor hear, nor feel, but the God who hath thy breath in his hand, and all thy ways, thou hast not glorified. Wherefore he hath sent the part of the hand which hath written that which is set down." Dan. v. 23. Then he interpreted the writing, which was, that his days were ended, and his kingdom divided, and given to the Medes and Persians; and this sentence was immediately accomplished, for "that same night Baltassar the Chaldean king was slain, and Darius the Mede succeeded to his kingdom." ver. 30.

(3.) We come now to *holy places*, or *churches* dedicated to the service of God, and sanctified by his presence. How holy such places are, and how much God requires them to be revered and respected, appears from many declarations of scripture. When Moyses approached to see the burning bush, the Lord, who was present in the bush, said to him; "Come not nigh hither, put off the shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is *holy ground*." Exod. iii. 5. When Josuah met the angel in the field, he "fell on his face to the ground and worshipped; and the angel said, Loose thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." Jos. v. 13. "Moyses and Aaron,

Aaron, and his sons, washed their hands and their feet, when they went into the tabernacle of the covenant, and went to the altar, as the Lord had commanded Moyſes." Exod. xl. 29. 30. And this command is thus expreſſed, "Aaron and his ſons ſhall waſh their hands and feet, when they are going into the tabernacle of the testimony, and when they are to come to the altar, to offer on it incenſe to the Lord: leſt perhaps they die; it ſhall be an everlaſting law to him, and to his ſeed by ſucceſſions." Exod. xxx. 19. And how great was the reſpect that God commanded to be paid to his ſanctuary? "Reverence my ſanctuary, ſays he, I am the Lord." Lev. xix. 30. He would not allow the high prieſt to go near any dead perſon, not even his father or mother, leſt he ſhould be defiled. "Neither ſhall he go out of the holy place, leſt he defile the ſanctuary of the Lord, becauſe the oil of the holy unction of his God is upon him." Lev. xxi. 11. If any of the prieſts had a blemiſh, he commanded that "he enter not within the veil, nor approach to the altar, becauſe he hath a blemiſh, and he muſt not defile my ſanctuary; I am the Lord who ſanctify them." Lev. xxi. 23. He would not allow any of the people to approach his ſanctuary, but ſaid, "I have taken the Levites, and have delivered them for a gift to Aaron and his ſons, (*who were the prieſts*) to ſerve me for Iſrael in the tabernacle of the covenant, and to pray for them, leſt there ſhould be a plague among the people, if they ſhould preſume to approach to my ſanctuary." Numb. viii. 18. When Jacob the patriarch had the viſion of the ladder reaching to heaven, and "awaked out of his ſleep, he ſaid, Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And trembling, he ſaid, How terrible is this place! This is no other but the houſe of God, and the gate of heaven." Gen. xxviii. 16. Hence David ſays, "Holineſs becometh thy houſe, O Lord, unto length of days." Pf. xcii. 5. And the wiſe man adviſes thus, "Keep thy foot when thou goeſt into the houſe

of God, and draw nigh to hear." Eccles. iv. 17. God himself thus threatens those that defile his temple, "And I will visit in that day upon every one that *entereth arrogantly* over the threshold; them that fill the house of the Lord their God with iniquity and deceit." Soph. i. 9. St. Paul confirms the same; "If any man violate the temple of God; him shall God destroy." 1 Cor. iii. 17. And of the execution of these threats, we have several striking examples. (1.) Nadab and Abiu, though priests and sons of Aaron, yet because they polluted the sanctuary by offering incense with unhallowed fire, "a fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them, and they died before the Lord." Lev. x. 1. (2.) The profanation of the temple of God is declared to be one of the chief causes of the destruction of it, and of the Babylonish captivity; for thus speaks Almighty God himself to his prophet Jeremiah. "Is this house then, in which my name hath been called upon, in your eyes become a den of robbers? I am he; I have seen it, saith the Lord. Go ye to my place in Silo, where my name dwelt from the beginning, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel: and now because you have done all these works . . . I will do to this house in which my name is called upon, and in which you trust, and to the place which I have given to you and your fathers, as I did to Silo. And I will cast you away from before my face, as I have cast away all your brethren, the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore do not thou pray for this people . . . for I will not hear thee." Jer. vii. 11. (3.) The destruction and profanation of the temple by the Babylonians was the cause of their ruin, and of the miseries that beset them when conquered by the Medes. "Flee ye from the midst of Babylon, *says the prophet*, and let every one save his own life . . . The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; and his mind is against Babylon to destroy it, because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance

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geance of his temple." Jer. li. 6. 11. (4.) King Antiochus resolving to bring over the Jews to his pagan rites, "defiled the temple of God, and filled it full of riots and revellings, and began to persecute the Jews; from that time forward all his affairs went wrong, his armies were beat, his cities taken, and he himself returning from an unlucky expedition into Persia, "The Lord, the God of Israel that seeth all things, struck him with an incurable and invisible plague . . . a dreadful pain in his bowels came upon him, and bitter torments of the inner parts . . . worms swarmed out of his body, and while he lived in sorrow and pain, his flesh fell off, and the filthiness of his smell was noisom to the army, and no man could endure to carry him, for his intolerable stink." 2 Mac. ix. He now began to enter into himself, and remember the evils he had done at Jerusalem, and attributed all his misery to that cause. 1 Mac. vi. 12. Then he promised to repair all damages, and "The holy temple also, which he had before spoiled, he promiseth to adorn with goodly gifts, and to multiply the holy vessels, and to allow out of his revenues the charges pertaining to the sacrifices." 2 Macc. ix. 16. but all to no purpose, Almighty God would not accept these offers from his sacrilegious hands, and "he died a miserable death, in a strange country, among the mountains." verse 28. (5.) When Heliodorus came to Jerusalem to rob the temple, and would not be persuaded to desist by what Onias the high priest said to him, all the people with Onias had recourse to God for help; and God was not wanting to avenge the sanctity of that place; for "all those of Heliodorus's men who presumed to obey him, falling down by the power of God, were struck with fainting and dread. For there appeared to them a horse, with a terrible rider upon him, adorned with a very rich covering: and he ran fiercely and struck Heliodorus with his fore-feet; and he that sat upon him seemed to have armour of gold. Moreover there appeared two other young men,
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beautiful and strong, bright and glorious, and in comely apparel: who stood by him on either side, and scourged him without ceasing with many stripes. And Heliodorus suddenly fell to the ground . . . and by the power of God, lay speechless and without all hope of recovery." 2 Macc. iii. 23. till he was afterwards recovered by the prayers of Onias the high priest. (6.) Some other examples of sacrilege and its punishment are found in the same book, as of Lyfimachus, 2 Mac. iv. 39. 42. of Callisthenes, ibid. viii. 33. and particularly of Menelaus, who stole holy vessels of gold out of the temple, and sold them, and by his briberies had once escaped the just judgment of his deeds. 2 Mac. iv. 32. 43. But at last, "The king of kings stirred up the mind of Antiochus against this wicked man . . as the cause of all the evils. And there was in that place a tower fifty cubits high, having a heap of ashes on every side; this had a prospect steep down. From thence he commanded the sacrilegious wretch to be thrown down into the ashes . . . for as he had committed many sins against the altar of God, the fire and ashes of which were holy, he was condemned to die in ashes." 2 Macc. xiii. 4. (7.) It is particularly to be remembered, that our blessed Lord himself, though he bore all his own sufferings with the most amazing meekness, yet was pleased to put on a great zeal when he saw the temple profaned. He reprov'd indeed the world for many sins, but he would punish with his own hands none but sacrilege; he refused to be judge in parting the inheritance between the two brothers, or in the case of the woman taken in adultery; but when he saw the temple of God profaned, he took upon himself immediately to be both accuser, judge and executioner. And this he did two different times; once about the beginning of his ministry, "When he went up to Jerusalem, *after the marriage of Cana in Galilee*; and he found in the temple them that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made as it were a scourge of little cords,

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cords, he drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and he poured out the changers money, and the tables he overthrew. And he said to them that sold doves, Take these things hence, and make not the house of my father, a house of traffick." Jo. ii. 13. He did the same a second time, on his triumphant entering into Jerusalem before his passion, and said upon that occasion, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves." Mat. xxi. 13. (8.) Finally, St Paul assures us, that sacrilegious and unworthy communions not only bring ruin and condemnation upon the soul, but also many miseries and untimely death in this world, for "Therefore, says he, are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep." 1 Cor. xi. 30. Of which the unhappy Judas is a striking example.

Q. 31. Why is all irreverent behaviour in churches so offensive to God?

A. For two strong reasons. (1.) Because the church is *the house of God*; that is, though God be every where present, has no need of a house made with hands, Acts xvii. 24. and consequently we may worship and adore him in all places; yet as in other places we may also do all our worldly affairs, he is pleased to have certain places set apart for his worship alone, where nothing can be done, but what regards it. Besides, God is present every where, but in a different character in heaven, in earth, and in hell. Even on earth itself, he is every where present as the sovereign ruler of all things, whether concerning soul or body, but he requires his churches to be set apart where he resides, to treat with us only about the concerns of our souls, and what relates to that alone. Lastly, though God be present every where, yet our corruption of heart would soon forget him, if some outward monitor did not put us in mind of his presence; this is done by his churches, which being appointed only for his service, puts us in mind who dwells there. For these reasons, God Almighty

ty makes choice of our churches as his houses, and is pleased to be in them in a particular manner. Hence when Solomon had finished the temple, he said, "The Lord promised that he would dwell in a cloud; but I have built a house to his name, that he might dwell there for ever." 2 Chron. vi. 1. And when he had ended the prayer of dedication, "fire came down from heaven, and consumed the holocausts, and the victims, and the majesty of the Lord filled the house." 2 Chr. vii. 1. And the night following God appeared to Solomon, and said, "I have heard thy prayer, and I have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice . . . for I have chosen and have sanctified this place, that my name may be there for ever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually." v. 12. And our Saviour himself declares, "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." Mat. xviii. 20. The very end for which churches are made, is that not two or three, but the whole christian people may meet in them, in the name of Jesus Christ, and adore him.

(2.) Because the church is the house of prayer; "My house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations." Isa. lvi. 7. For though God be present to hear our prayers in all places, yet as in all other places we also treat of our worldly affairs, as well as pray to God, therefore he wills that the church should be set apart for prayer alone, and that no worldly business should be transacted there. Besides, though God be willing and ready to hear our prayers in all places, yet he is much more ready to grant what we ask in the church than elsewhere, as he declared to Solomon at the dedication of the temple, "My eyes also shall be open, and my ears attentive, to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place." 2 Chr. vii. 15. And Jesus Christ says, "Again I say to you, that if two of you shall agree upon earth, concerning any thing, whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my father who is in heaven." Mat. xviii. 19.

It is in the house of prayer, where many meet to put up their joint petitions to heaven; and we see the effect of them in St. Peter's delivery out of prison. Acts xii. David well knew this truth, when he said, "We have received thy mercy, O Lord, in the midst of thy temple." Psa. xlvii. 10. And God says by Isaiah, "I will bring them into my holy mount, and will make them joyful in my house of prayer, and their victims shall please me upon my altar; for my house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations." Isa. lvi. 7. Hence, Daniel in his captivity opened his window towards Jerusalem three times a day, and prayed with his face towards the temple of God, when he could not go there in person. Lastly, in all other places of the world, the sins and wickedness every where committed, are a hinderance to our prayers from ascending up to God, with such force and efficacy as they would otherwise have; therefore Almighty God would have holy places set apart into which no sin should enter, that our prayers made there, being the more agreeable to him, should be the more beneficial to our souls.

From all which, it is easy to see how great a perversion it is of the use of the church of God, how great a disrespect shown it, and consequently how displeasing to God, to employ one's self when in the church, on any worldly affair, on any vain amusements, in looking about to see and be seen, in speaking with others without necessity, in doing any thing sinful, in a word, in doing any thing there; but speaking to God by prayer and praises, or in hearing him speak to us by the mouth of his ministers. "Have you not houses of your own to eat and drink, says St. Paul, and do you despise the church of God?" 1 Cor. xi. Have you not all other places for your worldly affairs? will you not keep even the house of God free of them? "Will you set scandals in the house in which his name is called upon, to pollute it?" Jer. vii. 30. Is he not a jealous God? Jealous of

of his honour and glory? How will he be pleased to see Satan's temples more respected by Turks and heathens, than his own churches by christians? Wherefore, (1.) "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth *keep silence* before him." Hab. ii. 20. (2.) "But as for me, in the *multitude of thy mercy*, I will come into thy house: I will worship towards thy holy temple *in thy fear*." Psa. v. 8. (3.) "Wo to you . . . ye great men, heads of the people, that go in *with state* into the house of Israel." Amos vi. 1. Remember the Pharisee and the publican. (4.) "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my *soul longeth and fainteth* for the courts of the Lord." Psa. lxxxiii. 1.

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